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GCII supplies North America's newest wooden coaster

Texas Stingray debuts, excites riders at SeaWorld San Antonio

AT: *Tim Baldwin*
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Texas Stingray debuted Feb. 29 and set records for the state. The 3,379 feet of track boasts Great Coasters International's signature curves as well as some customized surprises. COURTESY SEAWORLD

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — In a year of dynamic coaster installations, **SeaWorld San Antonio** was one of the first out of the gate with the debut of Texas Stingray. Bringing the park's coaster count to six, it is also the park's first wooden coaster.

The park is marketing the new attraction as Texas' tallest, longest and fastest wooden roller coaster. Of note, it is also the first project for **Great Coasters International, Inc**. in the Lone Star State.

"We're so elated to hear all the wonderful comments from people who have ridden Stingray so far!" said **Clair Hain**, president, CGII. "We are really very proud of how smooth of a ride experience we are able to create, and part of that comes from the years and years of experience and skill that our trackers have under their belts."

Part of the smoothness is attributed to GCII's handiwork with ipe wood, a much harder and denser wood than found on numerous typical coasters. GCII's construction team confirm that ipe was used extensively on Texas Stingray, notably in all of the pull-outs and turns. Ipe wood is strong and naturally resistant to rot, abrasion and insects. It is five times harder than most woods and nears twice the density.

"The choice to begin using ipe was not just a shot in the dark," said GCII Project Manager **John Snyder**. "Many years ago, our company conducted extensive research on every aspect of ipe lumber and how it could be adapted to the track laying process. We experimented not only with different track shapes, but also had to figure out what specialized saws, drills and screws were necessary and what effects heat and moisture would have over time. Great Coasters is very proud to say that we played a large part in popularizing this durable lumber for wooden coaster track."

"Once you take into account how much extra footage is needed to blend it into the rest of the straights, you end up with quite a bit of ipe, which is a great asset for a wooden coaster of this size," said **Hunter Lawrence,** engineer and project manager, GCII. "It's no secret that wooden coasters take a lot of care and attention to maintain, but outfitting the top two plies in ipe will significantly reduce the amount of track stack lumber that needs replaced over the course of the ride's operating life."

Byron Surrett, park president for SeaWorld San Antonio, has been with the chain for 44 years, but has just stepped into his role in Texas just as 2020 was beginning. He feels having this sensational new ride is an incredible moment. "This is an exciting ride. Everyone who comes to the park is just thrilled with it. The coaster enthusiasts are loving it. We think we're going to have a fantastic year."

Ray Gonzalez, director of loyalty, SeaWorld San Antonio, said, "We wanted to make sure that we catered not only to the thrill seeker but also the families. That's why the height requirement of 46 inches was so imperative. We had a small child at a recent event that this was his first big coaster — and he rode like 25 times! It's awesome to see so many smiles come out and people getting right back in line to ride again.

"This coaster is totally different than the rest of our lineup," said Surrett. "It goes back to the old days of the wooden coasters. It's really going to surprise people how fast it is and, really, how long it is. It's high energy."

Following a 90-degree turn, Texas Stingray delivers a 100-foot, straight first drop, a rarity for GCII. Following the crowd-pleasing dive, the layout swoops through a series of curving drops for which Great Coasters International is known, almost mimicking the undulating fins of a stingray. The second act of the ride is action packed. Curves and dips maintain consistent speed and the layout dives in, around and through itself. A surprise tunnel on the backside elicits its cheers as does enthusiastic reaction once on the brake run. Track length is 3,379 feet.

Hain likes the interaction with the park's rapids ride. "The special touch is definitely the quick zip out and back over Rio Loco. Anytime you have the opportunity to construct a new attraction that interacts with one of the park's existing

▸ See STINGRAY, page 6

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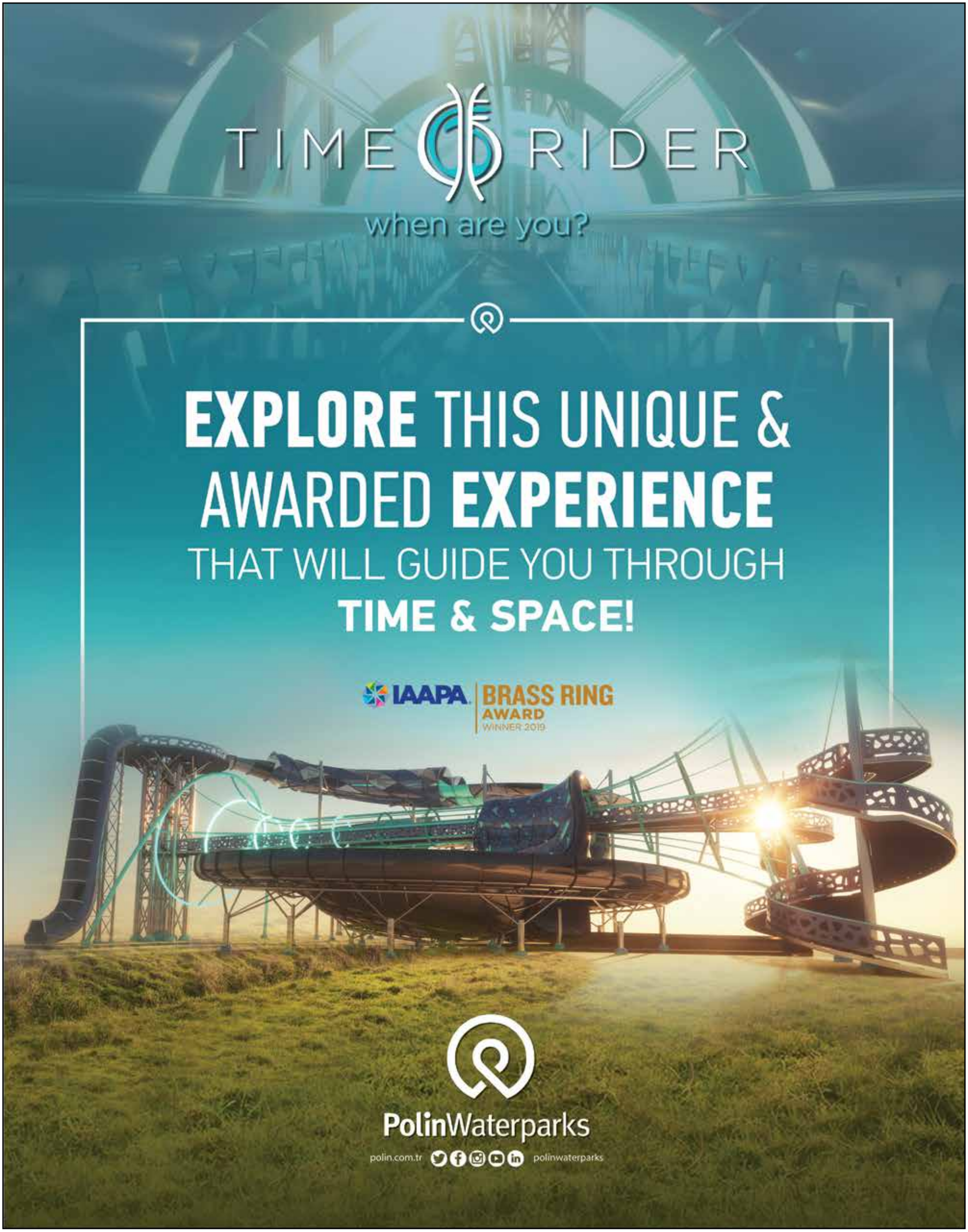
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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

***AT* NOTEBOOK:** *B. Derek Shaw, bdshaw@amusementtoday.com*

Treasure remaining gems

Shaw

Growing up in 1960s suburban Pittsburgh, I had the privilege of being able to visit four different and unique amusement parks. Today, only one remains. The first was lost to a proposed highway that was never built; in the second case, there was no one left for family succession and PennDOT (Pennsylvania Department of Transportation) through eminent domain, razed the third park for lane expansion of an existing highway.

The recent shuttering of Indiana Beach and Fantasy Island (and many more since I began this passion over five decades ago) made me take stock and treasure even more the remaining medium and small parks owned by small companies and family-run businesses.

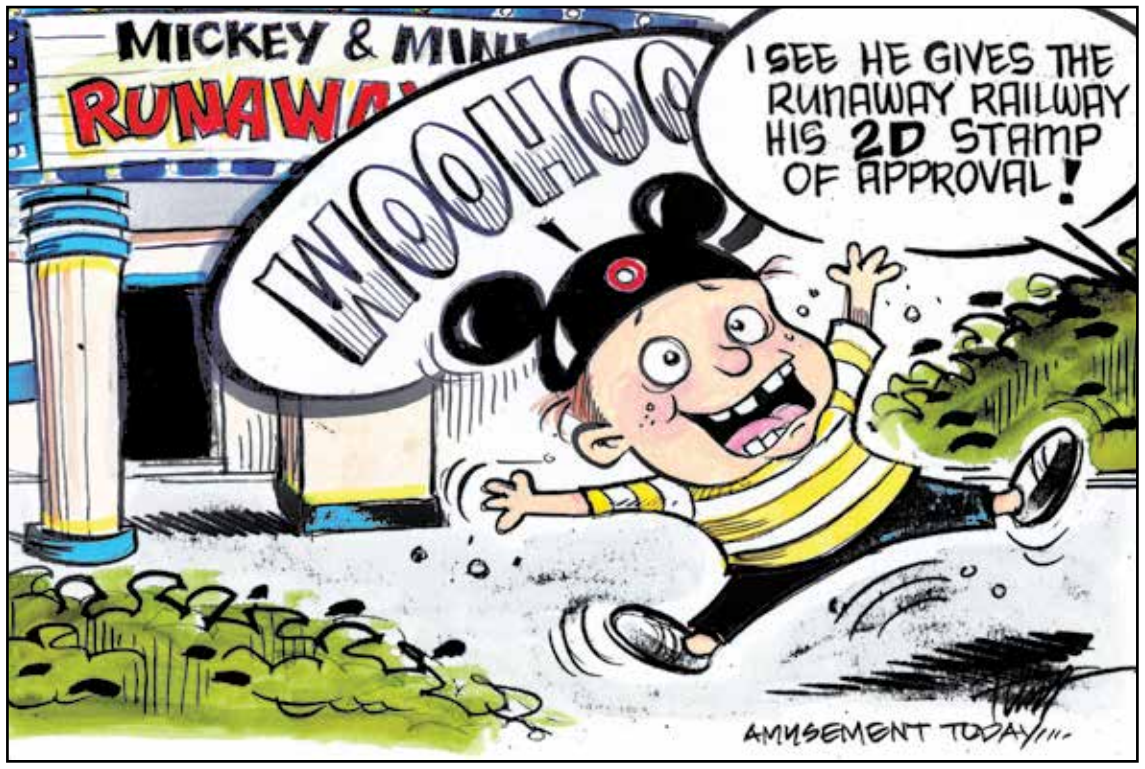
Navigating in today's world is a big challenge for large corporate-run parks — and even more so for the smaller players. There's a place for all — corporate theme parks, medium size amusement parks and family-run ventures.

There are many ownership and operational costs the average park attendee probably never considers: utilities, payroll, insurance, employee benefits, maintenance, new product purchase/acquisition, advertising, uniforms, security and taxes, to name a few, before the park even opens.

As time goes by, it sometimes doesn't make business sense to continue down the same path. This may include no one emerging in the family to move up, the venue not remaining viable with new rides and attractions, the value of the real estate and the changing entertainment tastes and needs of the attending public.

While we usually can't bring back the parks we've lost, savor the remaining family-owned and operated small business operations. Show your support by visiting often, purchasing their food and drinks, seeing their shows and attractions, buying souvenirs, playing their games and, of course, riding their rides. By doing so, your grandchildren and future generations will be able to experience these gems firsthand and not just read or hear about them through the memories of those who visited.

FLINT'S VIEW: *Bubba Flint*



INDUSTRY VOICE: *John W.C. Robinson, jrobinson@amusementtoday.com*

Industry will heal itself after COVID-19

Robinson

The amusement industry was forced to make a shocking change of course in early March. While *Amusement Today* had already reported on park and attraction closures in Asia resulting from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, our jaws still dropped with the sudden shutdown of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo as a preventative measure against the disease stateside. Our concerns immediately shifted to the well-being of the midway operators and concessionaires who depend on the popular event for their livelihood.

Within 24 hours, the dominoes began falling faster and closer to home. The Disney resorts on both U.S. coasts announced they were closing their theme parks for at least two weeks. Universal and Legoland did the same. In a surreal flash, the rest of the industry followed — and the season was delayed until at least April. Family entertainment centers also voluntarily closed or restructured admission policies to limit capacity in accordance with government-issued social distancing recommendations. (*See story, page 47.*)

This industry is a global family. From the teenagers awaiting their first minimum wage jobs to the industry veterans who operate legendary facilities to the designers and manufacturers who create the rides, every week of this unprecedented shutdown makes us feel the pinch and stir fears over what tomorrow may bring.

There will be shakeups and losses, to be sure. That same global family feeling is our key to knowing we'll get through this. After the Ohio State Fair ride tragedy in 2017, the industry banded together to enhance its safety preparation, testing and training. After the devastation of Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey in 2012, the attraction operators rallied and rebuilt — bringing the affected parks back stronger than ever. When the dust settles from COVID-19, the industry will regroup and return smiles to the faces of guests in no time.

The people behind the amusements, cut from a cloth woven of dreamers and fearless laborers, are uniquely committed to the serious business of fun. The industry is and always has been resilient, and this time, too, it will persevere.

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columinst(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

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2 MINUTE DRILL

AT: Janice Witherow

Tom Oliver, Six Flags Over Texas

Fifty years. That's how long **Tom Oliver** has worked at **Six Flags Over Texas**, and after half of a century, he is preparing to retire from a job he has poured his heart and soul into and from a company he has loved. Tom started at Six Flags Over Texas at the age of 16 dipping ice cream and never looked back. As manager of culinary services, he has been part of revolutionizing the food options at the park and will leave behind a legacy of commitment, grace, devotion to his team and a humble spirit. When not at the park, Tom enjoys checking out new adventures … restaurants, places and events. Now he will have plenty of time to do just that. All the best, Tom!

Dipping ice cream at the age of 16 was the beginning of a lifelong career at Six Flags Over Texas for Tom Oliver.
COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS

Title: Manager, Culinary Services.

Number of years in the industry:
2020 is my 50th year…yikes!

Best thing about the industry: Everything! The friends you make, the things you learn, the chance to help guests have fun … it's all great.

Favorite amusement ride: The Texas Giant.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be… Hopefully doing something in the sports industry.

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Finding quality staffing, then making them great leaders.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is… Its fast pace, you get to be outdoors, and you always have the opportunity to create new things.

In retirement, I plan to…
Have a whole lot of fun!

Favorite Six Flags memory:
My two kids growing up at the park.

I now hope to have more time to… Sleep in, have weekends off, hit the gym, and travel.

The thing I will miss the most about the day-to-day Six Flags activity is… Every day was different, always something new and challenging.

My favorite Six Flags project I worked on would have to be… Helping in the development of the Lemon Chill product for the park, then watching it go to amusement parks and stadiums across the country.

In one word, I hope my Six Flags legacy is… Be happy! (sorry, that's 2 words).

The last movie I watched was…
Either action or comedy. Can't do drama!

My 50 years at Six Flags has taught me this… There are a lot of fantastic people who work in the amusement industry, and I was lucky to be one of them.

It's spring! The worst springtime chore is… Cleaning out rain gutters. I really do need to find someone to do that for me.

Things I always have in my refrigerator are…
Hot sauce, jalapenos, and more hot sauce.

My favorite place to take a nap is…
Anywhere by a beach!

The last time I wore blue jeans was…
Any day off I get … blue jeans and a T-shirt, and I am ready to go.

Favorite dinner meal… Any type of Mexican food, and I guess a margarita would most likely be going with that.

It is 10 p.m. Where would we typically find you? At work, or driving home from a sporting event.

My biggest worry is… Sorry, I really don't have any at this time.

When it comes to mowing my yard, I…
Have someone else do it.

For me, the ideal Sunday morning consists of… I'll let you know after I retire. But if I was to guess…somewhere outdoors and somewhere near the water.

My dream vacation is… Going back to the Florida Keys, but rather than staying three or four days, I'd spend three or four weeks. Guess I can do that now!

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Seeing double

HERSHEY, Pa. — *Amusement Today*'s B. Derek Shaw got the chance to meet with a few of the folks on the schedule for the Pennsylvania State Showman's Association and the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs annual convention in Hershey, Pa. From left, Kenny Aronoff, Gunnar Nelson, Shaw and Matthew Nelson. Aronoff, who played 17 years with John Mellencamp and numerous other bands, is also a motivational speaker these days. He was the keynote speaker. The twin Nelson brothers provided the entertainment for the fair banquet the same evening. "Ricky Nelson Remembered" is a show they perform paying tribute to their late father, Ricky. The Nelsons were brought in by Variety Attractions.
AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Reflections ON FUN

AT: Lottie Minick

Cutting the mic — for laughs

In the early 1970s, the Top of the World dinner show at **Walt Disney World**'s Contemporary Resort hotel booked big-name acts for two-week gigs. The busy theater was run smoothly and efficiently by **Lars Iverson**, the stage manager, and among his duties was training the relief stage manager.

Iverson, along with the sound technician and two lighting technicians, directed the show from a booth at the back of the theater, and announced each performer as they stepped onto the stage. They had a special way of welcoming a new relief stage manager, who was always rather shocked in rehearsal to hear his or her voice booming through the speakers around the room for the first time.

During a relief stage manager's first night with an audience in place, Iverson remained in the booth as a confidence-boosting backup. He handed the microphone to the green hire with a flourish, wished the individual good luck and stepped back. Just as the relief stage manager was about to announce the talent, the sound technician would lean over his switch-and-button-filled board with a giant pair of scissors and casually cut the cord to the mic.

The inevitable moment of shock and panicked silence was quickly filled by the crew's laughter. Iverson then handed the relief stage manager a working microphone and took back the "dummy" one, which the sound technician had never plugged in.

In that instant, for every freshly initiated manager, "relief" took on a whole new meaning.

Lottie Minick is a 45-year attractions industry veteran and co-owner of Dallas-based Minick Associates, a design firm founded by her late husband, Bob. Her monthly column features behind-the-scenes anecdotes of her own and from those who have worked in the business. Got a fun industry story? Email lottie@minickassociates.com.

STINGRAY

Continued from page 1

rides, it creates a unique draw for both of those attractions. For example, tons of parks have rapids rides, but not many can tell their guests that they might see a wooden coaster flying above their raft!" he said.

Working around the rapids ride didn't come without its challenges. According to the GCII team, it required some extra attention during both the initial construction scheduling and the on-site construction phase. The ride was broken into 16 different zones that GCII used to systematically plan the construction order. The portion of Stingray that crosses Rio Loco was planned as one of the last to be built to allow the rapids to remain open during the summer and early fall. Construction workers had to cooperate extensively with park operations once the park went to weekend operation, because work by the rapids during the week had to ensure the area was clean and secure before there were rafts of guests floating through the next weekend.

SeaWorld provided input while Texas Stingray was being designed, GCII reps told *AT*. In collaboration with the park's requests and what the designers could do, statistics state that there are 16 moments of airtime during the ride.

Officials from the Harte Research Institute helped cut the ribbon (above left). A straight first drop (above right) is a rare feature for a GCII coaster. SeaWorld's conservation message is seen throughout the queue (right).
COURTESY SEAWORLD; AT/TIM BALDWIN

"GCII worked with **Skyline Attractions** on this project, and those kinds of specifics really come alive when the centerline is being tweaked and perfected," said Lawrence. "SeaWorld wanted the tallest, fastest, and longest wooden coaster in Texas, which we delivered, and then the designer's creativity took it the rest of the way to result in the fabulous layout that you can experience today."

Bringing the attraction home to SeaWorld's core message of conservation and preservation, the park partnered with **Harte Research Institute**. HRI seeks science-driven solutions for Gulf of Mexico problems in order to advance its long-term sustainable use and conservation. The institute was named after conservationist Ed Harte, following his generous donation. It has grown from an idea to a $15 million international research institute supporting six diverse research programs and 135 students, staff and researchers. HRI provided their knowledge to help create the signage in and around Texas Stingray, particularly within the queue. Supporting this partnership, five percent of select Texas Stingray merchandise is donated to HRI.

San Antonio has had very few wooden roller coasters in is history. Until Texas Stingray's opening on Feb. 29, there were none in operation. That void has now been filled with a dynamic new thriller garnering rave reviews.

"It is always a sad day when another wooden coaster is demolished due to a rough ride experience, and Great Coasters is doing our part to create traditional wooden coasters that people love but with a modern durability that will keep them smooth for an extended period of time," said Hain.

GCII is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2020.

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Thank You SeaWorld San Antonio

SeaWorld San Antonio kicked off the season with one of the first NEW attractions to open in the country – ***Texas Stingray***. The tallest, fastest and longest wooden roller coaster in Texas began thrilling guests on Saturday, February 29.

Everything is bigger in Texas, and ***Texas Stingray*** is no exception. Riders face an initial 100-foot drop, reaching speeds up to 55 mph over 3,379 ft. of track. Sixteen gravity defying airtime moments and a 100-foot tunnel are just some of the other superlatives this exhilarating ride offers guests.

Texas Stingray Fast Facts

Type of Ride:	Wooden roller coaster, the tallest, fastest and longest in Texas
Special Features:	57-degree first drop and 76 degree high turns
Ride Length:	3,379 feet of track
Drop Height:	100-foot drop
Maximum Speed:	55 mph
Maximum Height:	96 feet
Tunnel:	100 feet
Airtime Hills:	16 airtime hills
Minimum Rider Height:	46 inches
Ride Duration:	More than two minutes
Ride Manufacturer:	Great Coasters International, Inc. (GCII)
Partner:	Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies at Texas A&M – Corpus Christi

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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

Mickey and Minnie debut at Hollywood Studios — page 12 / Florida Strawberry Festival — page 24

Closures of Indiana Beach, Fantasy Island draws community reaction

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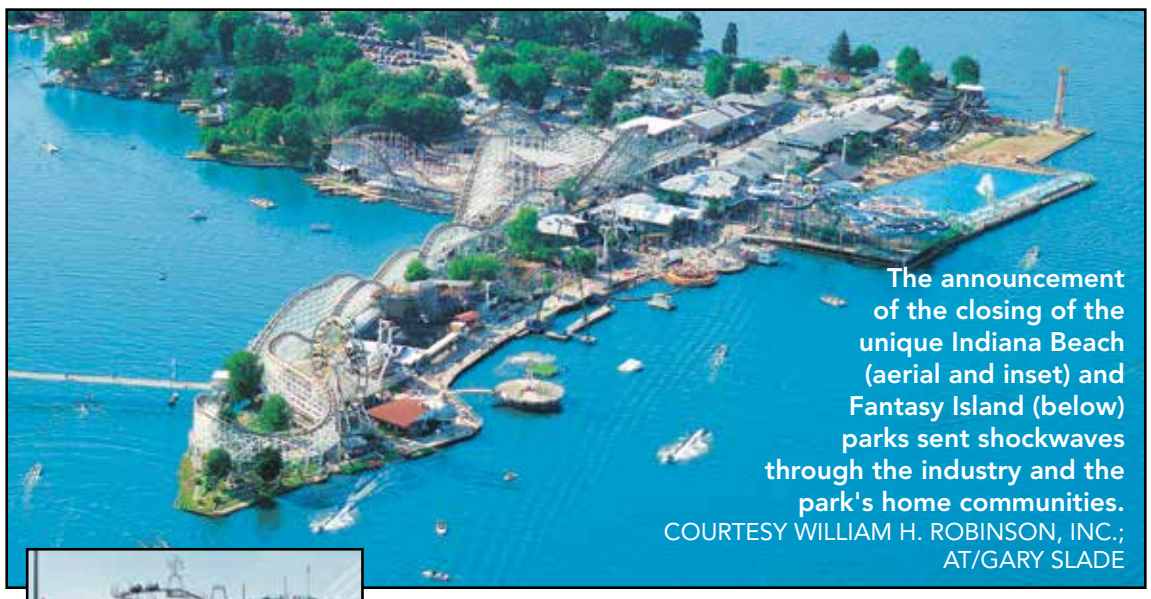

The announcement of the closing of the unique Indiana Beach (aerial and inset) and Fantasy Island (below) parks sent shockwaves through the industry and the park's home communities.
COURTESY WILLIAM H. ROBINSON, INC.; AT/GARY SLADE

MONTICELLO, Ind. and GRAND ISLAND, N.Y. — The mid-February announcements of **Indiana Beach** and **Fantasy Island** closing for good immediately struck chords among the communities affected as well as visitors and fans from afar. Two other properties owned and operated by **Apex Parks Group — Speed Zone** in Dallas and **Boomers** in Houston — were also included in the wave of closures. While disappointing to local families who frequented those family entertainment centers, the finality of those two operations did not (and shouldn't be expected to) draw forth the public outcry the loss of the soul and character an amusement park brings to a city, particularly two that have been around for decades. Fantasy Island had operated for close to 60 years and Indiana Beach was approaching a century of entertaining families.

Apex is based in Aliso Viego, California.

In similar statements from the affected locations, officials said, "Despite significant effort and a great deal of investment in infrastructure and rides, we have not seen an improvement in operating results."

The cities in which the parks reside are not as quick to give in so easily.

Monticello Mayor **Cathy Gross** said, "The announcement that Indiana Beach would not be opening has been a blow to our community." She admitted that the possibility had been in the rumor mill for several years.

The surrounding community in Indiana wants the park to stay. Monticello and White County officials are working with Apex to find a potential buyer. A joint press release from the city, county and Apex stated: "Executives from Indiana Beach Amusement and Water Park informed White County officials that the company will continue meeting with amusement industry leaders, brokers and investors in the hopes of finding a buyer."

Gross stated in the press release," City and County leaders have been in close contact with Apex. We all realize that this is not a personal decision, but a business one. We wish to remain good neighbors with Apex should there be any opportunity for a sale or resolution."

This offers a glimmer of hope for fans of the park.

Within days, supporters of both Indiana Beach had rallied and formed social media groups to help save the parks. Save Fantasy Island Amusement Park and Help Save Indiana Beach are two such petitions that were created.

Some rumors had circulated that **Fun Spot America Theme Parks** was looking at purchasing Indiana Beach. Management at that chain of parks clarified on its Facebook page that management had received an invitation to visit the park and review the facilities and attractions.

"We saw a park with rich history and heritage that has created memories for generations. Unfortunately purchasing Indiana Beach or any park is not in our current master plans. We are going to pray for the proper owners and operators to become visible so that Indiana Beach may continue to serve their guests and community for many more generations," the page stated.

Indiana Beach opened in 1926 as **Ideal Beach**. The owner was **Earl Spackman**. It evolved from a lakeside beach, bath house and refreshment stand quickly by adding rides and concerts. After being developed by the Spackman family for decades, eventually run by **Tom Spackman**, it was sold to **Morgan RV LLC** in 2008. That company's inexperience at operating an amusement park was publicly noted and Apex acquired the park in 2015 with hopes of bringing a renewed life to the park. Once again, the public embraced Indiana Beach.

Five roller coasters, each with its own distinct attribute, graced the park. Three wooden roller coasters from **Custom Coasters International** made the park more of a national draw, with the first one opening in 1994. Hoosier Hurricane not only created a scenic backdrop for the park from across the lake, but parts of it stood above the very waters of Lake Shafer. The uniqueness of these coasters makes for a challenge in relocating them to other locations.

If no new owner is found, another notable attraction lost forever is the award-winning Frankenstein's Castle, a beloved walk-through haunted house.

On February 29, a small group of supporters showed up to Indiana Beach to raise awareness in hopes the park can be saved. Some fans drove from Michigan. Support was intensified by an online petition which gathered 40,000 signatures. Despite the support, it comes down to finding an actual buyer.

Currently, legal action is taking place against Apex over season pass disputes.

Fantasy Island opened in 1961. Just mere miles from Niagara Falls, the park eventually found mixed success in its first decades. It was acquired by **Charles Wood**, then-owner of **StoryTown USA** near Albany. **International Broadcasting Corp.** purchased the park in 1989. Capitalizing on its location, it was briefly called **Two Flags Over Niagara Fun Park**. When IBC entered bankruptcy in 1992, Wood bought it back. **Martin DiPietro** became owner in 1994. The park operated under the name **Martin's Fantasy Island** from 1994 to 2016. Under his ownership, the park added water park attractions and the park's signature ride, Silver Comet, built by Custom Coasters International. Apex took over in 2016.

With great sorrow expressed from the community, it is regrettable that each of these parks were not able to offer a farewell season. **Miracle Strip** in Panama City Beach and **Pavilion** in Myrtle Beach both saw huge crowds when announcing final seasons in 2004 and 2006 respectively. **AstroWorld** announced final weeks to visit during the last month of its operation in 2005. Massive crowds attended.

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Gilroy Gardens theme park celebrating 20 years in 2020

AT: *Pam Sherborne*
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Gilroy Gardens Family Theme Park, Gilroy, California, kicks off its 20th anniversary this spring. The park is celebrating the birthday with themed attractions andactivities in the entire park. COURTESY GILROY GARDENS

GILROY, Calif. — Officials at **Gilroy Gardens Family Theme Park** want their visitors to feel like they are walking into one elaborate birthday party this season as the park kicked off its 20th anniversary this spring.

The entire park, located in Northern California's Santa Clara County, has been adorned in birthday trimmings including its rides and attractions. Special activities also have been created.

"We wanted to invite everyone to help us celebrate our 20th birthday, so we've turned the entire park into one big birthday party," said **Barb Granter**, vice president and general manager. "With pinwheels and bubbles and cupcakes with sprinkles, we welcome everyone who has grown up with Gilroy Gardens to come celebrate this very special occasion at this very special place."

The park opened as Bonfante Gardens Theme Park and continued under that name through 2006. Some rides were named after items grown such as strawberries, mushrooms and even garlic, for which the town of Gilroy is known.

The birthday celebration begins right inside the Main Plaza. There guests may check out the Birthday Clubhouse and learn a special birthday rap.

The festivities continue at "party patios" throughout the park, with different themes ranging from pirates and fairy princesses to sports heroes and mad scientists. There is a giant birthday card that guests may sign, as well as Memory Spots that spotlight the park's unique history and special memories that have been created over the last two decades.

There are more than 10,000 trees, including the world-famous Circus Trees, trees grafted and planted by Axel Erlandson in nearby Scotts Valley. The park's founder, Michael Bonfante, purchased the trees and moved them to the park. COURTESY GILROY GARDENS

Founded by **Michael** and his wife **Claudia Bonfante**, the 535-acre park offers a unique family experience centered around trees and plants with an emphasis on local history. It features over 40 rides and attractions and more than 10,000 trees, including the famous Circus Trees, trees grafted and planted by **Axel Erlandson** in nearby Scotts Valley, then purchased by the park's founder and taken to Gilroy Gardens.

Jason Raby, communications director, **Articulate-Solutions**, said outside of the extensive birthday celebration, at Gilroy Gardens, no other additions were made to the park for the 2020 season. Next year, they plan to add an event called Wildwood.

"We don't have a lot of information on this yet, but it will be a night time light festival for adults and kids," Raby said. "The park will be transformed at night with beautiful light displays throughout the beautiful gardens."

The 20-year history of the park hasn't always been easy going. In fact, there were times that surviving this long seemed, at best, uncertain.

It all started in 1975, when its founder purchased land for a tree and plant nursery called **Tree Haven**.

Bonfante loved trees and nature. He found it had a calming effect on him as he operated and grew the family grocery store business, **Nob Hill Foods.** It took 25 years for Bonfante to turn the land he had purchased for Tree Haven to open it as Bonfante Gardens.

The area went through several changes over the years. Two years after Bonfante opened Tree Haven, he created **Nob Hill Family Park** at Tree Haven as a home to all of his botanical wonders and a recreational facility for his employees.

In 1988, Bonfante decided that since his employees loved the park, so he would open Nob Hill Family Park to the public. He did so and called it **Hecker Pass…A Family Adventure**. The picnic and garden area remained and some small children's rides were added.

As his visions and dreams grew, he ended up selling Nob Hill Foods, which he had grown to 27 stores and 2,500 employees in 1998.

Hecker Pass…A Family Adventure continued to operate until the amusement park was completed.

During the first several years of operations, the park struggled with low attendance. In 2003, **Paramount Parks** was brought in and took over management. In 2006, Paramount Parks was purchased by **Cedar Fair Entertainment Company.** That company continues to manage the park today.

In 2008, the City of Gilroy purchased the park. It now operates as a non-profit organization.

•gilroygardens.org

The park features over 40 rides and attractions including a Balloon Flight from Zamperla (below) and the Panoramic Wheel, as well as paddle boats modeled after swans (above). COURTESY GILROY GARDENS

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Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway debuts off-the-rails family fun

AT: *David Fake*
Special to Amusement Today

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Mickey Mouse's first ever ride-through attraction, Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway, opened to the public on March 4. Not since *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, the 1988 feature film by **Disney**-owned **Touchstone Pictures**, has the cartoon world so seamlessly co-existed within the real world. However, in this clash of the two worlds, guests of **Disney's Hollywood Studios** are not just watching the antics on screen. This time, guests are invited by Conductor Goofy to, literally, walk right through the projection screen and into the cartoon world of Mickey, Minnie and friends, and take a magical and visually stunning ride through the remainder of the Mickey short film, *Perfect Picnic*.

Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway is the much-anticipated replacement of The Great Movie Ride, a dark ride celebrating the broad spectrum of cinema that opened with the park in 1989 and whisked its last guests through classic **MGM** movies in August of 2017. After the new ride was announced, many Disney fans wondered how a Mickey attraction would fit within a movie-themed park, especially, since it was taking up residence in the park's iconic replica of Hollywood's Chinese Theatre. Disney Imagineers were up to the challenge and seamlessly themed the new attraction to the premier of a new Mickey short, *Perfect Picnic*. Since the real Chinese theatre has been home to countless, star-studded movie screenings and premieres, including a screening of the 1931 Mickey Mouse Cartoon "Mickey Steps Out," the Mickey Mouse attraction is a natural fit for the theatre.

Inside the Chinese Theatre, guests pass by several new and recreated Mickey shorts posters on their way to a "screening room" to watch *Perfect Picnic*, which features Mickey, Minnie, Pluto and Goofy as a train engineer. As one might expect with

Walt Disney World Resort President, Josh D'Amaro (right) stated that Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway is "a crowning achievement in the multiyear transformation of Disney's Hollywood Studios." The park strives to put guests in the center of their favorite stories. AT/DAVID FAKE

Goofy in the locomotive, things go awry, and Goofy invites the guests into the cartoon while he makes repairs. During the screening, guests are introduced to the song "Nothing Can Stop Us Now," a fun little ditty and earworm, as well as the theme to both the attraction and the short.

Once inside the cartoon, guests are ushered into rows and board the Goofy-helmed train before departing on their tour of Runamuck Park. It isn't long before Goofy's train encounters additional difficulties and the ride transforms into the "runaway railway." Rest assured, though, because in true Disney fashion, all is made well and there is a happy ending where guests get to become part of that *Perfect Picnic* Mickey short.

What makes this ride so amazing is that immediately upon departing in the train, guests will notice the incredibly vibrant visuals of the ride that are a made possible by employing cutting-edge projection mapping technology. These projections create a two-dimensional effect on even three-dimensional set pieces that truly create the illusion of being immersed within the cartoon world. This technology, along with a few other tricks, also allows for rooms and show scenes to be completely transformed in full sight of guests. This technology is the result of a design collaboration between Disney and **Panasonic**, the Official Projection Technology of **Walt Disney World Resort** and **Disneyland Resort**.

"As Disney guests enter Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway, they enter into a cartoon world unlike anything they've experienced before," said **John Baisley**, Senior Vice President of Professional **Imaging & Visual Systems, Panasonic Systems Solutions Company of North America**. "Not only do our 4K laser projectors precisely and accurately reconstruct the specific color range of the actual Mickey Mouse cartoons, but they also enable visitors to become immersed in a world where the physical environment and visual environment are seamlessly blended together. This required flexible, reliable and customizable projection technology to meet the complexity of the attraction configuration."

"Because this is the first ride-through attraction that features Mickey Mouse and other iconic Disney characters, this ride required technology that could seamlessly recreate colors, scenes and characters that we all know and love," said **Tom LaDuke**, Principal Show Systems Designer, **Walt Disney Imagineering**. "Guests will truly feel like they've left the 'real world' behind when they enter our attraction, and with Panasonic's high-quality 4K projection technology and unmatched support, we are able to make the cartoon world a reality."

Another technology that is integral to the magic of Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway is the ride's trackless vehicles — the same technology that is utilized on Rise of the Resistance and the Ratatouille attractions, among others. No one has implemented this technology as masterfully as Disney, and maybe moreso on this attraction that any other. Multiple times throughout the attraction, ride vehicles move in unison, individually, and, seemingly chaotically, but every millimeter of movement is precisely programmed and controlled.

Disney Imagineers painstakingly studied, watched, and rewatched all the Mickey Mouse films, drawing from them common themes to be included in the short, and the attraction is overflowing with hidden Mickeys and Easter eggs. Ultimately, what Disney has created with Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway is to Classic Mickey Mouse fans what Rise of the Resistance is to *Star Wars* fans. With every ride on the attraction, guests experience something exciting, fun and fresh. It would not come as a surprise to hear die-hard Disney purists compare Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway to Disney's classic dark rides, since what Disney Imagineers have delivered in the attraction is nothing short of that same awe-inspiring storytelling. Some may argue this truth, but one needs only watch the eyes of a child as they fill with wonder and excitement to witness this most magical of Disney effects.

Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway is already slated to be coming to Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California in 2022, and the *Perfect Picnic* and ride's theme song "Nothing Can Stop Us Now" has been made available on Spotify and iTunes. But consider yourself warned — you just may find yourself smiling while humming it for days on end.

Housed inside the Hollywood Chinese Theatre replica (middle), the vibrant visuals of Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway are made possible by employing cutting-edge projection mapping technology. These projections create a two-dimensional effect on even three-dimensional set pieces that truly create the illusion of being immersed within the cartoon world. AT/DAVID FAKE

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Urban Air Adventure provides a new bounce in the Buckeye state

The Battle Beam (left) and Urban Air Sky Rider (right) provide active fun at Urban Air Adventure Park's Hamilton, Ohio, location. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

AT: *John W.C. Robinson*
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

HAMILTON, Ohio — Residents of Southwestern Ohio can finally excercise their right to fun with **Urban Air Adventure Parks** opening its first location in the area. The Hamilton, Ohio, location — just outside of Cincinnati — occupies more than 30,000 square feet of space in a strip mall location formerly occupied by an **H.H. Gregg** store.

"As we considered doing another facility, we looked carefully for communities across the country that we felt there could be a need. We feel Fairfield Township/Hamilton area is just that," said **Sloan Ladehoff**, co-owner of the new location as well as Urban Air Adventure Park's Tulsa, Okla., location. "The project took about 10 months [after securing the property]. We could not have done it without the partnership from Urban Air HQ, our vendors and the partnership from Fairfield Township, Butler County, and the city of Hamilton."

The Hamilton location offers a full line-up of activities that every guest can enjoy. From wall-to-wall trampolines, a dodgeball court, ninja warrior courses and tube playgrounds, both thrill seekers and their pint-sized counterparts find activities to conquer at Urban Air.

With the whole family —particularly parents — in mind, comfortable seating areas are located throughout the FEC. Observing parents can even relax in one of multiple massage chairs scattered amongst the viewing areas.

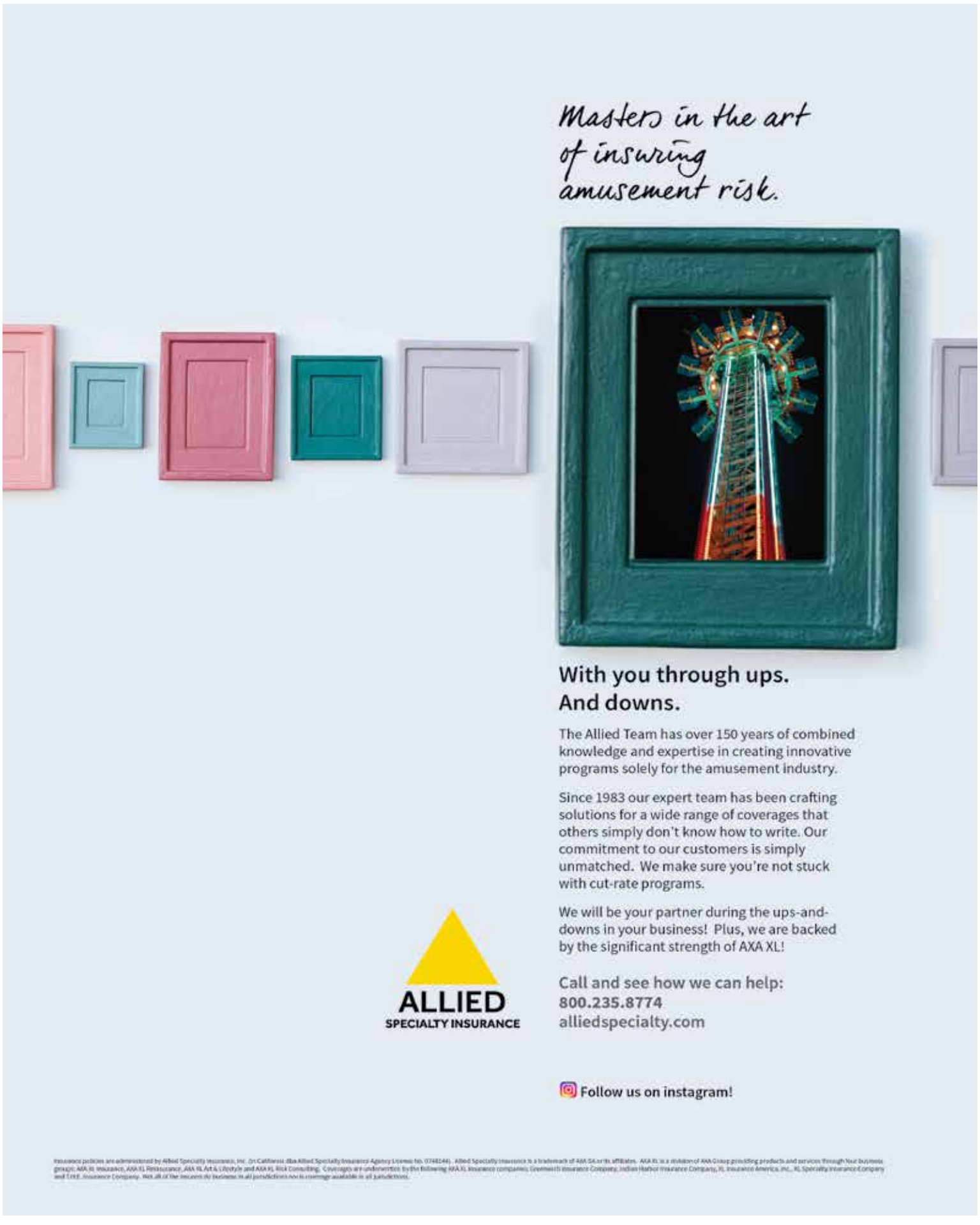
The eye-catching centerpiece of the Hamilton location is its ropes course, located 20 feet above the birthday party dining area.

"This is actually one of the bigger ropes courses that we've done," stated **Keaton Gleim**, field operations manager for Urban Air Adventure Parks." This one is huge, and I'm pretty excited about it. We like having the birthday party tables right underneath, so the kids can be climbing at the top and waving to their parents below."

The ropes course is part of the Urban Air Adventure Hub which also features exclusive Urban Air attractions such as a one-of-a-kind Sky Rider indoor coaster. With the facility's ceiling at a relatively low height, the Urban Air team implemented a creative solution to lengthen the Sky Rider's course.

"We've added what we call a 'transition station' to let us put longer Sky Riders in buildings with shorter ceilings," said Gleim. The station allows patrons to complete the first rail of the Sky Rider, then climb through an obstacle tunnel, and continue their flight out of the tunnel along the next rail of the coaster. "Previously, a 40-foot ceiling height was requied to have any reasonable length along Sky Rider." The Hamilton location's Sky Rider features two rails, letting guests fly directly above the entrance

See URBAN AIR, page 16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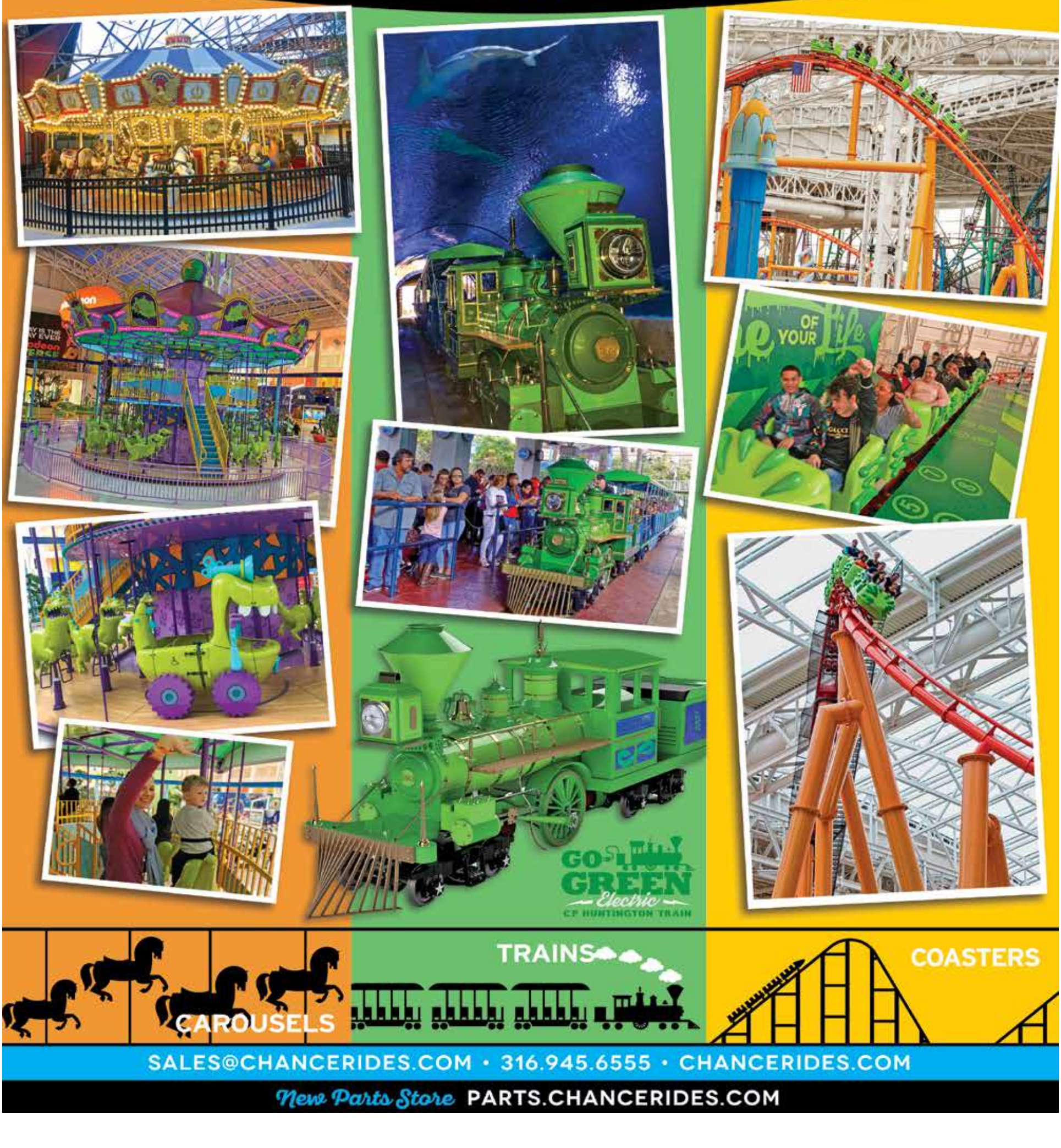

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Urban Air Adventure Hub features a ropes course positioned 20 feet above the birthday party and dining area, allowing parents to relax and eat while their children enjoy the course challenges. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

URBAN AIR

Continued from page 14

and ticketing area of the Urban Air Adventure Park.

Entering the new location the evening before its grand opening were first responders from the Cincinnati-area community. Firefighters, policemen and women, and EMS filled the location with their families to enjoy several hours of private fun prior to the Saturday, February 29, grand opening.

"Our First Responder Event is publicized on Facebook and, in addition, the local franchisee visits the local fire departments and shakes hands with the fire chief, the local captains and personally asks them to come out and enjoy the evening," said Gleim.

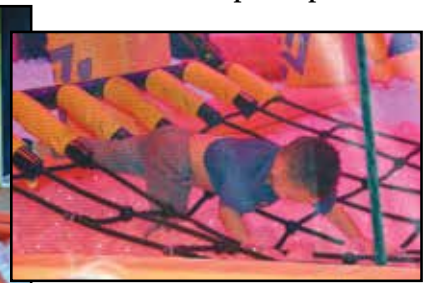
"We had a fantastic First Responder night during our grand opening weekend. It's vital we have a good working relationship with our police, firefighters and paramedics. They are our welcome guests anytime,"added **Kyle Pitzer**, owner of the Hamilton location. "We are new to the community and still reaching out to the charities and organizations that fit our mission of families having fun through active play."

Active play for families is what Urban Air Adventure Park appears to be all about. The Hamilton location offers four different Ninja Warrior Courses that ages and skills of all levels were enjoying. In addition, the warrior course offers transparent walls that face the food court and other neighboring attractions, allowing family and friends to watch their cohorts take on the course challenges.

"We know families are looking for ways to spend time together, and the more active the experience, the more memorable," said Urban Air's founder and CEO **Michael Browning**. "Parents want their kids off their phones giving them less 'screen time,' and more time to play and engage with other kids their age the old-fashioned way. We've got them covered at Urban Air where the focus is on active play for people of all ages!"

Urban Air Adventure Park's committment to active fun in the Southwestern Ohio area doesn't end with the Hamilton opening. A second Cincinnati-area franchise is already in the works with a planned Summer 2020 opening.

•urbanairtrampolinepark.com



Guests of all ages enjoy the varying levels of the Ninja Warrior courses during Urban Air Hamilton's First Responder event. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Park Post-its

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

FlyOver America, the flying theater attraction that takes guests on an aerial voyage of the nation's most popular landmarks, announced in February the opening of their newest flight adventure: Fly Hawaii, located in the **Mall of America**, Bloomington, Minnesota.

The new Fly Hawaii simulation invites guests to take in the majestic beauty of the Hawaiian Islands. The flight will glide riders along the shores of Maui, gaze into the volcanic craters on the Big Island and soar above the famous Napali Coast in Kauai.

The experience also has special effects including wind, mist and scents to add to the immersive nature of the attraction. Riders are suspended in the air with feet dangling 10 to 40 feet above the ground and transported in a giant half-spherical dome screen.

FlyOver America is located in **Nickelodeon Universe** at Mall of America, home to more than 520 shops and attractions.

•

In other Mall of America news, officials of the **Museum of Memories** announced at the first of March the opening of its new 4,600-square-foot facility on the second level of the mall.

Guests into the museum explore a variety of rooms, featuring hand-painted murals and props invoking a variety of childhood memories from Saturday morning cartoons to birthday parties. There are also rooms featuring dreamy clouds and a coloring book with oversized crayons.

Created from childhood memories of **Steffi Lynn Tsai,** the Museum of Memories, is a nostalgic environment for all ages.

Museum of Memories is open for a limited time through the summer at Mall of America.

•

A flown **SpaceX Falcon 9** rocket exhibit is expected to come this spring to **Space Center Houston**, Houston, Texas, the Official Visitor Center for **NASA Johnson Space Center.** The Falcon 9 first stage booster new exhibit will provide an intimate look at a reusable rocket used to further space exploration and America's commercial space industry.

Thanks to a generous contribution from SpaceX, Falcon 9 is the newest addition to the nonprofit's growing collection of flown space vehicles and historic rockets.

The Falcon 9 booster will be displayed horizontally, allowing guests to walk underneath the flown rocket. It has a 156.5 foot-long frame with a stage diameter of 12 feet and houses nine first-stage engines. It's one of only two SpaceX Falcon 9 boosters currently on display in the world and the first commercial space exhibit for Space Center Houston.

This particular booster launched in June 2017 in support of SpaceX's 11th commercial resupply mission (CRS-11) and performed a successful landing back on earth. When the booster was flown a second time in December 2017 (CRS-13), it marked the first time a flown booster was used for a NASA mission.

•

Officials at **Toverland,** the theme park located in Sevenum, Netherlands, saw a record number of visitors in 2019. There were 862,000 guests recorded last year, a 50,000 increase over 2018. Toverland officials are attributing this growth to the opening of a new entrance called Port Laguna and the new themed area, Avalon.

Even though this project was completed in 2018, it opened in July, mid-operating season. Last year gave guests the entire season to enjoy the multi-million investment that increased the size of Toverland by one-and-a-half.

Toverland plans to extend its operating hours and add more events for 2020. Some of those include 12 Midsummer Evenings and 14 Halloween Nights. The official start of this year's operating season was March 28.

Toverland's ambition for the coming years is to break the threshold of one million visitors.

•

The **Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum**, located in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which is a cultural institution that tells the story of hot air ballooning, has never had a permanent exhibit. That is expected to change in time for the annual **Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta's** 50th anniversary in 2021.

The **Balloon Museum Foundation**, the nonprofit, fundraising arm for the museum, last month kicked off a public campaign to raise money to assemble the permanent exhibit. Plans for the exhibit are to include a digital timeline, artifacts, virtual reality experiences, photographs and video to chronicle the history of the fiesta, as well as details about flight and aviation, tourism and economics.

It also will provide a behind-the-scenes look at world's largest hot air balloon festival.

Many of the pieces that will be in the permanent exhibit are already on hand and stored in a climate-controlled warehouse. There also are individual pieces related to the fiesta that are on display in the museum and are expected to be included.

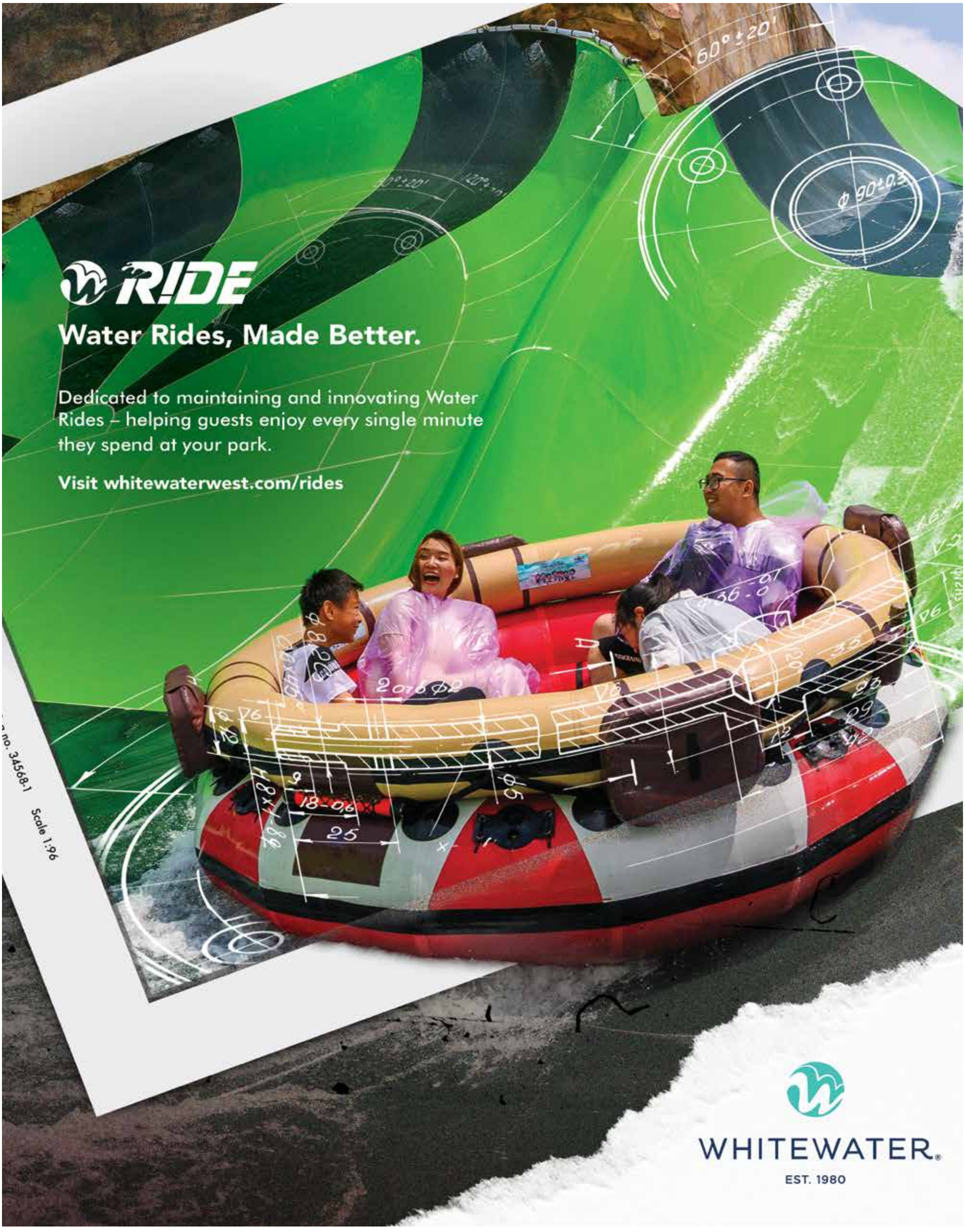
The foundation already has raised $400,000 through contributions from the State of New Mexico and the City of Albuquerque.

•

After more than three months of renovations to its colossal Great Hall, the **National Building Museum** in Penn Quarter in Washington, D.C., reopened on March 13.

The construction work, led by the **U.S. General Services Administration**, required replacing the Great Hall's concrete floor with a modern foundation. Layout changes also were made including moving most of the exhibitions to the second floor. A new visitors center also is located on that floor.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the National Building Museum. Along with the renovations, the museum opened with a new exhibit on D.C.-based architectural photographer **Alan Karchmer.**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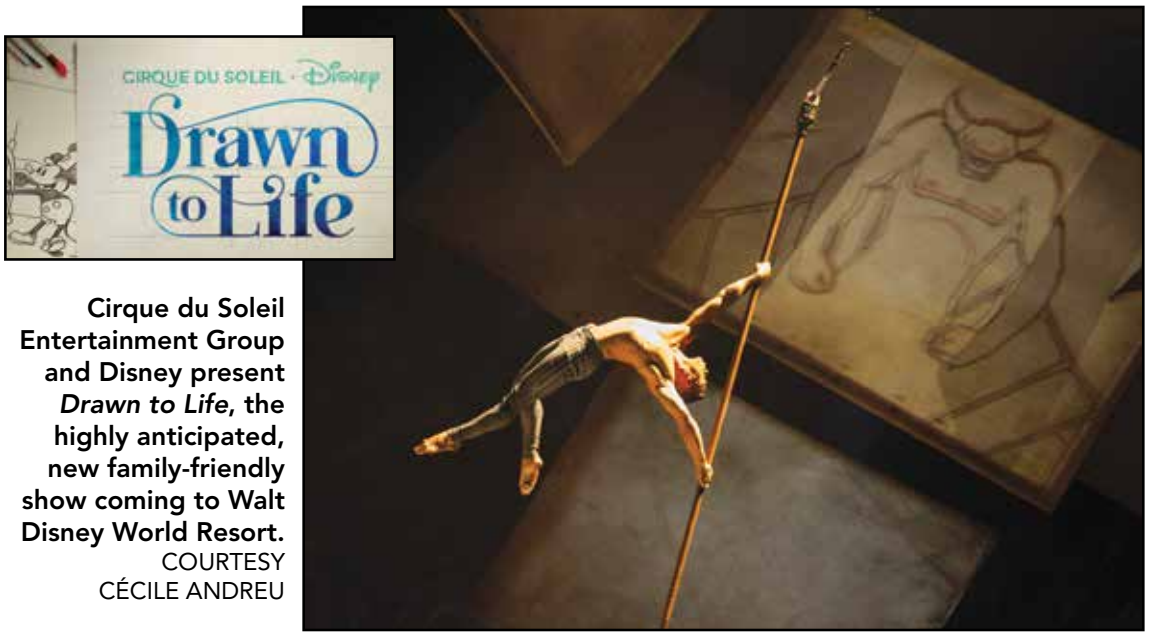
Drawn to Life: Cirque du Soleil, Disney meld artistry and physicality

AT: *David Fake*
Special to Amusement Today

LAKE BEUNA VISTA, Fla. — **Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group**, **Walt Disney Animation Studios**, and **Walt Disney Imagineering** are all synonymous with creative and artistic excellence. But until now, these iconic memory-makers and forerunners in their fields have not collectively channeled forces as they have in creating Cirque du Soleil's 50th original production, *Drawn to Life*, the second resident show at **Walt Disney World's Disney Springs** shopping, dining and entertainment district.

The companies describe *Drawn to Life* as "A live acrobatic journey telling the story of Julie, a determined girl who discovers an unexpected gift left by her Disney animator father: a sequence of unfinished drawings. The audience follows Julie as she sets off on a quest and leaps into the inner world of animation, guided by a surprising pencil and a quirky troupe of imaginative muses fueled by her childhood Disney memories. This love letter to the art of Disney animation celebrates life in all its motions and emotions while Julie discovers new possibilities that animate the story of her future."

Throughout the show, Disney animation is reinterpreted through innovative design, acrobatic performances, dazzling choreography, eclectic costuming, all-new Disney animation and a new and original score inspired by the timeless and much-loved Disney music. The story is driven by an international cast of 65 artists performing 10 unique acrobatic acts, including an energetic rhythmic gymnastics group number, a pencil-test-inspired aerial pole routine, and a stilt walker act from Togo in West Africa. "The stilt walking act is near and dear to our hearts at Cirque, because **Gilles Ste-Croix**, one of our founders, was initially a street-performing stilt walker," said **Michel Laprise**, the show's writer and director.



Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group and Disney present *Drawn to Life*, the highly anticipated, new family-friendly show coming to Walt Disney World Resort. COURTESY CÉCILE ANDREU

''What fascinates us is that moment when life appears in drawings. Just like in an acrobat's body, the visceral physicality of animation. The way they perform, the way they create the illusion of life," said Laprise of the animations in *Drawn to Life*. These easily identifiable animations are from some of the most beloved Disney films, as well as all-new animations created by Disney artists led by **Eric Goldberg**, best known for such characters as the Genie in the animated classic, *Aladdin*. Goldberg's animations are projected onto a canvas of giant, blank sheets of paper that adorn the stage's proscenium. These pages move magically through the air above and around the stage throughout the performance. When asked the secret to successful animation, Goldberg said, "You have to believe that those characters exist — that they are real. Because, if you don't, how can you expect the audience to believe?"

But just because much of the animated characters are readily recognizable, does not mean that the show does not contain new surprises. "You'll get to meet some of your favorite characters, but maybe in a very different way," says Cirque du Soleil's **Fabrice Becker**, the show's creation director.

Drawn to Life uses many new technologies and art forms to achieve these effects and portray the complexity and physicality of animation. In addition to technology, the show's acrobats' spectacular feats also bring the animations to life in several of the acts. Igniting the imagination is an unmatched hallmark of both Disney and Cirque du Soleil. **Josh D'Amaro**, president, Walt Disney World Resort, said of the new show, "It blends all the heart, humor and joy of Disney storytelling with dazzling new acrobatic performances and effects never before seen in a Cirque du Soleil production." To this point, it is a surprise to many that it took this long for the two companies to exercise their combined talents in the way they have with *Drawn to Life*. It's important to note that even though Cirque du Soleil previously brought *La Nouba* to the stage at Disney Springs (then Downtown Disney), a show which ran for over 9,000 performances from December 23, 1998 through December 31, 2017, *La Nouba* did not meld IPs.

The creative teams from both Disney and Cirque du Soleil are excited for *Drawn to Life* to be seen, as they are very pleased with the product of the collaboration. "Interpreting the works from Disney's spectacular catalogue of animation into a live show was a thrilling opportunity for Cirque du Soleil, and we couldn't be more proud of this production," explained **Diane Quinn**, chief creative officer, Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group. "We have created a stunning show that will inspire audiences to dream and reach for the impossible."

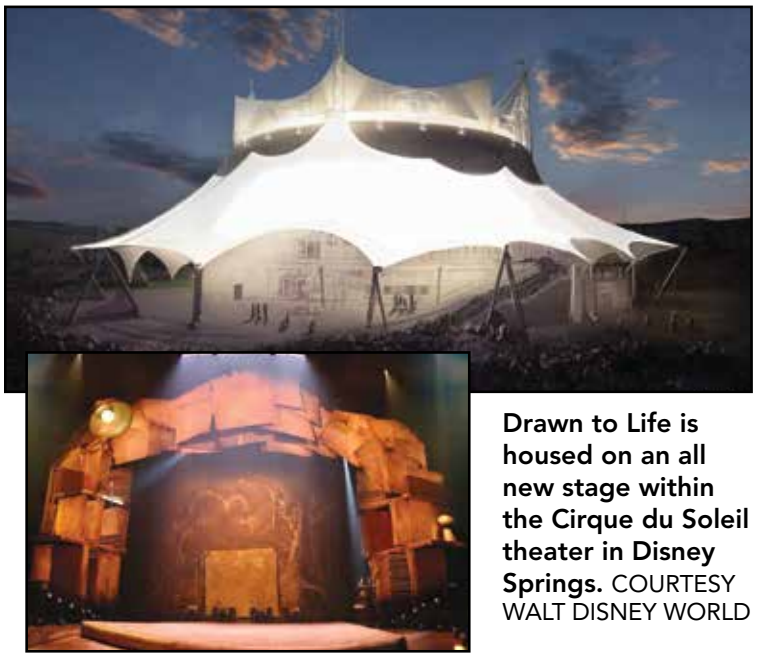
"Together Disney and Cirque du Soleil have created an incredible new family entertainment experience that is sure to awe audiences and touch the hearts of adults and children alike," says **Natalie Woodward**, vice president of production for Disney Parks Live Entertainment. "Our two organizations are rooted in artistry and share a passion for creating memorable experiences. That's one reason *Drawn to Life* is a show that could only come from the creative minds of Disney and Cirque du Soleil."

The enthusiasm and excitement for this collaboration is not only being expressed by the hands-on team working on the show, it is also echoed by the senior executives of the organizations. The Walt Disney Company's CEO, **Bob Chapek**, CEO said, "For more than 60 years, we've been bringing Disney stories and characters to life in our theme parks around the world. Now our teams at Walt Disney Imagineering and Walt Disney Animation Studios have joined with Cirque du Soleil to create an entirely new experience that will wow Walt Disney World guests and bring timeless, enchanting Disney stories to life in an unforgettable new way."

Similar sentiments have been expressed by **Daniel Lamarre**, President and CEO of Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group, who commented, "We have joined forces with Walt Disney Imagineering and Walt Disney Animation Studios to create a show that combines Disney animation and heart with the unique artistry and theatrical sensibility of Cirque du Soleil. We are honored to be the first company trusted to work and create around these classic Disney characters in this unique way."

Drawn to Life will perform two shows per day every Tuesday through Saturday when it premieres on April 17. Each performance will welcome an audience of up to 1,580 guests.

•cirquedusoleil.com/drawntolife



Drawn to Life is housed on an all new stage within the Cirque du Soleil theater in Disney Springs. COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD

Discussing the new production are (l to r): Michel Laprise, writer and director, Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group; Michael Jung, Walt Disney Imagineering; Disney's discussion moderator; and Fabrice Becker, Creative Director, Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group. AT/DAVID FAKE

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Current, undeveloped land where Icon Park plans to erect the Orlando Gyro Drop Tower and the Orlando Slingshot. AT/DAVID FAKE

Icon Park Orlando to add Museum of Illusions, submits plans for 2021

AT: *David Fake*
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — In 2019 **Icon Park** announced that it will again partner with **Slingshot Group of Companies**, the owner/operator of the park's record-breaking StarFlyer Orlando swing ride, to bring two additional thrill rides to the International Drive park. Those attractions, the Orlando Gyro Drop Tower, a free-standing, 400-foot-tall freefall ride, and the Orlando Slingshot, a 300-foot-tall catapult ride, took a step forward with the submission of site plans and renderings to Orange County for approval.

The park describes the Orlando Slingshot as "an attraction towering 300 feet in height where riders experience the adrenaline rush of a lifetime as they are catapulted 450 feet into the air — nearly fifty stories high!" An interesting feature of the Orlando Slingshot is an innovative dual-loading platform which will allow guests to be loading a capsule while another capsule of guests is experiencing the attraction. The Orlando Gyro Drop Tower will raise riders high above Icon Park and the International Drive skyline and begins with an intense climb while riders gyrate around the tower until it reaches the top. Then, after what the park calls "an unexpected twist," riders freefall 350 feet back to Earth at up to 75 miles per hour.

Like the StarFlyer Orlando, the two new attractions will stake claim to "world's tallest" stats for the categories of free-standing drop tower and slingshot when they open in 2021.

"We've had such great success with StarFlyer, we can't wait to bring the Orlando Slingshot and Orlando Gyro Drop Tower to the world-class destination of Icon Park," said **Ritchie Armstrong**, partner of **Slingshot Group of Companies**. "We love Icon Park and hope to continue working together to bring exciting attractions to Orlando."

"Icon Park is already known for having the tallest observation wheel on the East Coast and the world's tallest swing ride. We're beyond thrilled to add two more jaw-dropping attractions to our destination," said **Chris Jaskiewicz**, president and CEO of Icon Park. "Icon Park is the name to know as a complete destination of family-friendly adventure."

Icon Park also recently announced that the **Museum of Illusions** will be joining the 20-acre park's 40-plus restaurants, bars, boutique shops, rides, and attractions. The vision of the museum is to set a global trend where fun and education go hand-in-hand by bringing its most astonishing optical, photographic, holographic and interactive illusions to Icon Park. Popular exhibits include the "Upside-down room," "Vortex Tunnel" and "Building Illusion." Since its launch as a unique project in Zagreb, Croatia, in 2015, the Museum of Illusions has expanded to over 18 cities around the globe. The Orlando museum will open in the latter half of 2020.

"Icon Park is proud to offer one of the largest selections of entertainment options in Central Florida. From thrilling attractions to top-tier museums to world-class restaurants, there's something for everyone to enjoy," said Jaskiewicz "We're excited to welcome the Museum of Illusions into the Icon Park family and know our guests are sure to be amazed at what they'll see."

Currently, guests to Icon Park can visit **Sealife Orlando Aquarium, Madame Tussauds Orlando** and StarFlyer Orlando which are anchored by The Wheel, a 40-story observation wheel.

•iconparkorlando.com

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson
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Ripley's Believe or Not! and **Ripley's Super Fun Zone** of Branson have become Certified Autism Centers (CAC), designated by the **International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards** (IBCCES). The certification requires guest-facing staff to complete a training and certification program as well as a commitment to ongoing training and enhancements to better serve guests with cognitive and sensory disorders, including autism.

"We are honored to become a part of this awesome community," said **John Dixon**, general manager of Ripley's Branson attractions. "We look forward to sharing and creating great family experiences!"

"Our mission is to help as many locations as possible become certified so they can better serve all guests, including those who are currently underserved but are such a powerful and important part of our community," said **Myron Pincomb**, IBCCES board chairman. "We're excited to add Ripley's Believe It or Not! and Ripley's Super Fun Zone of Branson to our network of Certified Autism Centers."

•

Miami-based VR entertainment network **Boxblaster** reports that it is expanding into its second franchise location of **Big Air Trampoline Parks**. In the second facility, located in Branson, Missouri, Boxblaster was brought in at the owner's request to replace an Exit Reality VR attraction and upgrade the location to the company's virtual reality platform.

Boxblaster had installed their VR attraction in the Big Air Trampoline Park location in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in January. The Spartanburg Big Air location offers more than 35 attractions including a mechanical bull, climbing walls, a ninja warrior course, a laser maze and a focus on award-winning birthday party packages.

"We were really impressed with content, performance, support, and operations of the Boxblaster VR attraction," Owner **Dustin Pelletier** said. "It was an obvious choice for us to replace our Exit Reality attraction and upgrade our Missouri location to Boxblaster's content and operating system."

The Big Air Branson location is nearly 40,000 square feet and has over 65 attractions catering to guests of all ages.

•

Two Bit Circus announced the U.S. debut of Oddball from **Beyond**, a **Wellington** company. Adding to their lineup of next-generation entertainment experiences, the new free roam virtual reality game entertains up to 8 players at a time.

Oddball transports players to a cartoon world, where two teams compete for points by firing sticky balls from custom launchers to deplete the health of opponents, who appear as pandas in this colorful VR landscape. The game involves the latest wireless VR technology, allowing players to move freely through the expansive VR world — which spans more than 1,000-square-feet of physical space — without the limitations of a tether or backpack PC.

"There are so many factors that make Oddball a totally unique gaming experience — from the amazingly vibrant world and the ability to explore it freely to the repeatable gameplay and panda avatars that add to the great social experience," said **Brent Bushnell**, CEO and co-founder of Two Bit Circus. "It's a perfect fit for our park and we're so excited to share this fun experience with our guests."

•

Inowize announced that VR Quest Arena, their flagship product, has gone through a major rebranding process and it's now called Arkadia VR. The new name and brand was formally announced at Amusement Expo International 2020 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

"This transformation was necessary because we have grown, our product has grown beyond its initial design, we have grown as a company and as a team, and our audience has matured," said **Claudia Mihalache**, managing director and co-founder at Inowize.

Arkadia was one of the first location-based Virtual Reality attractions on the market. The VR system was first developed as a single-player, free-roam solution, then transformed into a multiplayer attraction. At this time, Arkadia is the only small-size VR system that has both a four-player and a six-player setup, so owners can choose the best fit for their centers based on their budget, space allowance and traffic level.

Inowize is working with FEC owners and amusement industry professionals to constantly improve its attraction. The six-player system offers 50% more throughput and 50% more income possibilities than the classic four-player system.

•

Media-based attractions developer **Triotech** announced that it has received orders for more than 200 units of its coin-op VR interactive simulator Storm.

Storm field tests show strong earning numbers, driving an expanding demand on this new VR interactive simulator.

"We began to get commitments from clients for the Storm directly on the show floor at IAAPA Expo 2019," said **Ernest Yale**, Triotech's founder and CEO. He added, "Storm combines both postive guest experience as well as ROI for the operator, and we're thrilled of its success so far."

•

A family entertainment center that was expected to open at **Bonita Lakes Mall** in Meridian, Mississippi, this March may not be ready for its grand opening until the summer, according to the property owner.

Andy Weiner, president of **RockStep Capital**, said construction of **Hype Indoor Adventures** is complete and crews are beginning to install equipment in the former Sears space, but some of the equipment is delayed in China.

The 93,000-square-foot facility is expected to feature trampolines, ropes courses, batting cages, virtual reality, axe throwing and indoor electric go-karts.

After a windblown start, the Florida State Fair finishes just fine

AT: *B. Derek Shaw*
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Sunset provides a picturesque backdrop to the 116th Florida State Fair. Wade Shows with help from nine independents filled the midway. COURTESY FLORIDA STATE FAIR

TAMPA, Fla. – "The weather kept us on our toes this year at the start but soon worked out to be absolutely gorgeous. A tornado watch/warning caused us to have to shut our doors early on opening day [February 6] for the safety of the public, but once that was past us, we enjoyed some of the best warm and sunny Florida weather we could have had," said **Cheryl Flood**, executive director, **Florida State Fair**. **Frank Zaitshik**, owner of **Wade Shows** said there were 15 rides that couldn't operate due to high winds before the fair closed opening day. "There was no damage as the cold front had negative [no] impact on [day two which was] Student Day."

Final attendance count for the 12-day run of the 2020 Florida State Fair came in at 455,851. "This attendance count was not as high as last year's fair (483,591 final count – 2019) but was still one of our top attended fairs of this decade," explained Flood.

"Spark a Tradition" was the theme of the fair. "We chose tradition as our theme and centered our marketing messaging around this theme to celebrate returning fair guests that have made this annual event a family tradition and to encourage new patrons to join the tradition," said Flood.

As one of the first fairs to take place early each year, the ride count was large (91) with nine independents supplementing Wade Shows ride arsenal. Other operators who participated included **Powers Great American Midways**, **Dreamland Amusements**, **Otterbacher Shows**, **Fair Ride Entertainment, LLC**, **Wonderland Amusements**, **Biggest Wheel LLC, Wood Entertainment Company, SJ Entertainment** and **Top Scan, Inc.** Wade Shows, who first started as an independent ride operator in 1992, now serves as the midway manager, a role they have played the past six years. "We had a great group of independents. We had a safe, incident-free fair," said Zaitshik.

There were a half dozen new versions of popular rides that were purchased late 2019/early 2020 to freshen up the line-up. The midway offered three roller coasters including Mighty Mouse spinning coaster (**Zamperla**), Super Cyclone (**Interpark**) and Windstorm (**SDC**). The 155-foot Midway Sky Eye (**Lamberink**) was again brought in. The Florida State Fair has two permanent rides, the Sky Glider and the Electric Slide (**SBF-VISA Group** performance slide) owned by the fair and managed by Wade Shows. These three plus Hit In 2000 (**Mack**, Himalaya) were the top grossing rides on the midway. The show also featured the largest portable observation tower in their line-up (**Larson International**).

Midway revenue was the second best in the history of the fair at $4,954,689. "We have always enjoyed a great partnership with Wade Shows, Frank Zaitshik and team," said Flood.

"Given we are the first state fair of the year, fair managers enjoy visiting sunny Florida and checking out what's new and different within the industry. In a market like Tampa where there is so much to do, we have to stay on top what are the new trends and what consumers would enjoy when visiting their state fair," said Flood.

The fair continued with numerous time-honored promotions such as Hero's Day. Active and retired military, veterans, law enforcement officers, and firefights got in free on opening day. They also continued their Fair Cares for Hungry Day and teamed up with Publix grocery store and Feeding Tampa Bay to offer $5 admission to those donating two or more non-perishable food items closing day. Two Dollar Tuesday promotion resurfaced after great success in 2019. This promotion was one way to attract patrons to come out to the fair on a weekday. "Historically, our Tuesday attendance averages 18,000. This year we had 39,000 visitors, exceeding the record setting 38,000 in 2019," said Flood.

A half million dollars was allocated in the fair's marketing plan. "This was an increase of $25,000 when compared to the amount spent on advertising for the 2019 fair. Our media mix was as follows: 22% radio, 21% broadcast television, 13% cable television, 22% billboard and out of home, 5% digital display, 4% social media, 5% streaming services and 7% print," said Flood. "This was a slight variation from last year's campaign as we anticipated higher competition in the traditional media-buying market due to the election-year and political advertising."

The Florida State Fair is a great place to debut new food items. **Peachey's Baking Company** offered a S'mores Doughnut, (two Amish doughnuts stacked on top of each other, sandwiched with marshmallow crème, covered in chocolate sauce, and topped with a toasted marshmallow.) If savory is more your thing, a Steak and Eggs Sundae from **DeAnna's Steak Sundaes**, included fresh cut fries, warm cheese, sour cream, real bacon, cheesy grits, a fried egg, and their famous steak.

The fair also kept with its tradition of family fun, a strong competitive livestock program and an amazing creative arts program. **Ripley's Believe it or Not!** walk-through exhibit featured more than a century of strange and cool history, from Luke Skywalker's light saber in the original *Star Wars* series to a huge piece of the Berlin Wall. They also had **Bello Nock**, previously featured on **America's Got Talent**, back for another year in his new stunt show, Daredevil Daze, featuring all kinds of adrenaline-infused tricks and acts. There were a couple of new special events this year. The Deep-Fried Dash 5K, a race throughout the fairgrounds, provided participants a corn dog courtesy of **Super Dog** at the completion of their run. Also a "Fair Foodie Crawl" was held.

Entertainment included **SFO**, a Journey tribute band that drew quite a crowd. Other acts were **Southbound 75**, **Luke Langford Band**, **Rob Hazen**, **Free Fallin**, **Right on Key** and **JunNk**.

Billed as the the largest portable observation tower in North America, Wade Shows brought the single trailer ride to the midway. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

In addition to live music, there were shows like SOAR by **Natural Encounters**, an interactive bird show that featured multiple species of exotic birds and taught lessons about wildlife conservation. **Team Big Air** and **Xpogo**, were two high-energy stunt groups that worked in tandem to put on a very exciting show.

"We constantly are changing the way our grounds look and how things appear onsite. Recently we completely repainted our entire grounds with new, fresh, colors," Flood said, regarding challenges being faced. the fair faced. "Due to our increased attendance numbers we are running out of parking and are going to have to explore alternative transportation options and off ground's sites for parking."

"The 2020 Florida State Fair was a huge success and definitely one of our top financial record years in the history of the Florida State Fair. We are already excited about the 2021 Florida State Fair and plans are already under way!" Zaitshik commented, "All in all I'm really excited about the results this year."

The 117th edition takes place February 11-22, 2021.

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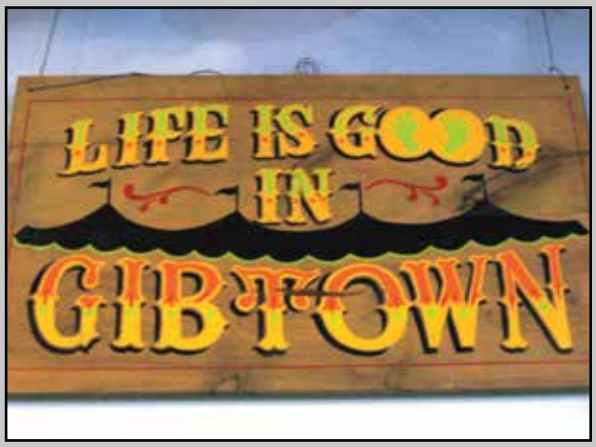
People, places, products and pets as seen in Gibtown during Florida week

Celebrating at the conclusion of the OABA chairman's reception, from l: Corky Powers, Powers Great American Midways, Hall of Fame recipient; Debbie Powers, 2020 OABA Chair; Greg Chiecko, president; Frank Zaitshak, Wade Shows, Hall of Fame recipient and Fred Pitroff, Pioneer award winner. To date 54 people (of which five are women) have been inducted, with 31 who served as president of the organization.



The sign on the clubhouse wall says it all. For four days each year, the carnival industry descends upon Gibsonton, affectionately known as Gibtown.

Izabela Smith, project manager for Czech-based Luna-Park Rides is shown with Theodore, her under-one-year-old tyke at the end of the trade show. Theo will be by mom's side during many of the shows she attends.

Another proud owner of a Wadkins Expo Wheel. From l: Roger Wadkins, Sr.; Jason Crawford, manager; Jamie Huff; Mannie Davis, principal; Kate Richter and Blake Blash. The new Davis Shows NW wheel was scheduled to debut March 20 in Troutdale, Oregon.

Rocky took his owner (and Alamo Amusements owner, Patrick Sheridan) along to the OABA reception honoring the 2019 Hall of Fame and Pioneer recipients on the second floor of the IISA Carnival Museum.

Wayne Kunz with *Amusement Today* Founder and Publisher Gary Slade holding up a photo of the Conklin Shows Doppel Looping and sharing stories about this portable Schwarzkopf roller coaster.

Handling the Cash Bonanza activities at the two-day NICA/Fare Foods trade show are NICA board members. From l: Kathy Ross, immediate past president; Daryl Whicheloe, director; Vincent Nelson, director and Jay "Rocco" Russell, treasurer. Allied Specialty Insurance donated the prize money.

Kenneth Ragley, principal, represented Food Concession Signs. The Houston Texas based company makes any type of sign that has to do with food concessions and the carnival industry.

Antoinette Johnson, a free-lance subcontractor, helped draw in the crowd to the Berk Concession Supply Company booth. The Warren, Ohio, operation provides novelty and lighted drinkware, plates, cups and other supplies.

ALL PHOTOS AT/B. DEREK SHAW

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85th annual Florida Strawberry Festival has 'perfect' 2020 vision

AT: *David Fake*
Special to Amusement Today

PLANT CITY, Fla. — At 85, the **Florida Strawberry Festival** touts that it still has "perfect vision." The play on words minces the current year with 20/20, the eyesight rating considered to be perfect. "Our Perfect Vision" also happened to be this year's festival's theme for its 11-day run, which began on National Strawberry Day, February 27, and concluded on March 8.

The festival is a celebration of everything strawberry. There is strawberry-themed clothing, gifts and foods available that are both new and nostalgic. There are also photo ops with the festival's mascots, Mr. and Mrs. Berry, and an eating contest to determine who can finish a four-pound (yes, four pounds!) strawberry shortcake the fastest. Guests can even take a spin on a strawberry-themed ride named "The Berry Go Round!"

It should come as no surprise that the festival's home, Plant City, would lay claim to a world's greatest strawberry-something title, and it does. In this case, the "Winter Strawberry Capital of the World." This title may lead some to wonder why the claim is limited to "winter capital," so *AT* did the research. What we discovered is that there are multiple locations in the U.S. alone that, unofficially, embrace themselves as "Strawberry Capital of the World." These cities include Chadbourn, N.C.; Ponchatoula, La.; Watsonville, Calif.; among others. Plant City produces a larger crop of strawberries each year to all except Watsonville, Calif., which is able to produce strawberries almost year-round. Technically, second in strawberry crop production, Plant City decided that since it does produce more than three quarters of winter strawberries, it can "officially" lay claim to the title

Belle City Amusements filled the Florida Strawberry Festival's two midways with over 80 rides, games and attractions. AT/DAVID FAKE

of winter capital, and is sole, rightful owner of that crown. In 2020 growers said they expected to produce around 40 million "flats" or cases of strawberries, which translates to around 70 truckloads per day over the 16-week season, according to the **Florida Strawberry Growers Association**.

The Florida Strawberry Festival was born in the 1930s when the newly organized **Plant City Lions Club** had the idea to unite communities through the celebration of the strawberry harvest and the end of the crops season, The Lions Club has participated in the festival throughout its long history. **American Legion Post #26** is also recognized for its effort in getting the Florida Strawberry Festival reactivated in 1948 following a six-year hiatus during and immediately following World War II. Now "The Florida Strawberry Festival Association" is governed by a board of directors from the local community and a small staff who work year-round to make the Festival happen.

The festival is quite an undertaking for the small Central Florida agricultural town 11 miles outside of Lakeland on the I-4 corridor between Tampa and Orlando. Plant City has a population of fewer than 39,000 people, yet each year it takes more than 2,500 local volunteers to make the festival happen. But don't underestimate this small town, because they know how to put on a festival. In fact, The Florida Strawberry Festival appears on several must-see event lists, and it has even recently appeared in the top 30's of lists of best festivals nationally, often outranking **The Florida State Fair**, which occurs earlier in the year and is just down the road in much larger Tampa. Attendance for 2020 was expected to top 500,000 visitors to the Strawberry Festival. A record 562,237 visitors attended in 2019. However, this year with a combination of record high and low temperatures along with severe storms and the onset of concerns regarding large gatherings of people attributed to the Coronavirus, attendance is not expected to surpass the previous record year (Note: complete 2020 attendance figures were not yet available at press time).

Regardless, many still made the trek to the festival again this year; some expressly to try its signature Strawberry Shortcake. It is a yearly tradition for many, and experienced attendees know to arrive at the festival hungry. One can fill up quickly on the plethora of food options that put the strawberry front and center. In addition to the shortcake there is Strawberry Fudge, Strawberry Cookies, Strawberry Fritters, Strawberry Kettle Korn, Strawberry Cobbler, Strawberry Sandwiches and even Strawberry BBQ Brisket.

New this year is the Strawberry Ramen Noodle Burger from Carousel Concessions is a "sandwich" consisting of a hamburger patty between two deep-fried ramen noodle "buns" and finished with a savory and sweet strawberry soy sauce, then topped with, of course, fresh-cut strawberries. AT/DAVID FAKE

The aptly named Berry Go Round was a strawberry-themed ride along the popular midway. AT/DAVID FAKE

Wish Farms Soundstage (above), a 10,500-seat grandstand, opened in 2018 and welcomed world-class acts such as Rascal Flatts, Reba McEntire, MercyMe and over 20 others this year. COURTESY FLORIDA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

While food is top of the list for many, it's not the only reason the festival draws the crowds it does. A popular paid concert series resides in the Wish Farms Soundstage, a 10,500-seat grandstand which opened in 2018. The festival welcomed world-class acts such as, **Rascal Flatts**, **Reba McEntire**, **MercyMe**, and over 20 others just this year.

Belle City Amusements of Deltona, Fla., the festival's contacted midway operator, offered more rides, games, and attractions than ever in 2020 (over 80!) at two locations, a kiddie midway and the traditional midway. **Charles Panacek** of Belle City Amusements said, "We had the largest revenue in our history at the Strawberry Festival in 2019." He commented that he was optimistic about the final numbers for 2020 but could not yet say how this year compared to last. He also said that the Giant Wheel and Magnum are always crowd pleasers and generally the most popular rides at the festival.

Overall the Florida Strawberry Festival organizers consider 2020 another very successful year and expect continued success in 2021 due to their unique offerings. "The Strawberry Festival experience doesn't begin on the midway, it happens as soon as the family pulls into the parking lot. We give people a slice of America they can't get anywhere else… Our vendors, exhibitors, and volunteers have truly outdone themselves again this year," said Florida Strawberry Festival President **Paul Davis**. "We like for our guests to have a fresh festival experience year after year, and the new food items, on-grounds entertainment and attractions for this year's event are pretty spectacular."

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MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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The recent tornado that ripped through Tennessee damaged the **Wilson County Fairgrounds** in Lebanon. Plans are to return everything marred back to as original as possible. From their Facebook page, "It is going to take a lot of work, but we will be better and stronger in the end."

The **Wilson County Fair** expands to ten days this year, August 13 - 22, with **Reithoffer Shows**, providing the midway.

•

North American Midway Entertainment (NAME) sealed the deal with numerous new and renewed contracts.

Last fall they entered into a six-year contract with the **South Carolina State Fair.** The big draw last year was the premier of the 150-foot Celebration Wheel (**Bussink Holland Giant Wheel**) commemorating their 150th anniversary.

Before Christmas, NAME inked a deal with the **Miami-Dade County Youth Fair** that extends their long-term partnership through 2024. Typically NAME brings 100 rides to that spot.

The **Calgary Stampede** signed a contract through the end of 2024. NAME plans to premier the new Super Gondola Wheel (**Bussink Holland Giant Wheel**) at this years' Stampede.

Two Indiana fairs, the **St. Joseph County Fair**, South Bend **and Elkhart County 4-H Fair**, re-signed in late 2019, each for another 10 years. Both fairs have been with NAME for over 30 years.

Westerner Days, Red Deer, Alberta, and **The Greater Gulf State Fair**, Mobile, Alabama, are two recently sealed contracts that extend through 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Danny Huston, owner, said, "These contract signings with large scale and mid-size events paves the road for our company to lead the industry with new capital, midway amenities innovative customer service mandates and staffing and further grow our national audience by providing a very quality product at every level and every event. The future looks bright."

•

By adding five additional days, the **New York State Fair** becomes the longest fair in the northeast. Governor **Andrew Cuomo** allocated $4.9 million of the annual state budget to the 2020 fair, extending it to an 18-day event. Not to the size of the 27-day **San Diego County Fair** or the 24-day **State Fair of Texas**, however, this move places the fair among some of the longest in the country.

The fair has always concluded on Labor Day. By adding five days to the front end, this will not impact student fairgoers who are back in high school and college in September. The earlier start date does overlap with six of the state's 50 county fairs, including second largest **Erie County Fair**. This will impact vendors, exhibitors, carnival providers and other organizations as logistics are worked out.

Wade Shows has been the midway provider since 2015, bringing in 64 rides last year. The company is no stranger to longer fairs with their participation in the 18-day **San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo**.

The fair is held August 21 - September 7.

•

On-going financial issues and misconceptions, much due to weather-related difficulties, have been plaguing The **Nebraska State Fair**. Executive Director **Lori Cox** recently said plans are going well for the 2020 edition as financial problems faced last year are being reconciled with costs being pared down.

The biggest myth is the fair is going bankrupt. "The budget was approved in 2020 and we took those approved numbers and compared them to actual December year-end numbers, and we are now ready to present an amended budget," Cox said as reported in the *Grand Island Independent*. "It looks better than the budget we had back in October."

A gate admission price increase was another myth that Cox said was false. To generate advance ticket sales, various promotions have been planned including this past Christmas season promotion for the sale of carnival wrist bands and gate admissions, yielding $35,000. "That is the most we have ever sold for a Christmas sale," said Cox.

The fair is taking back their volunteer program, previously handled by the **Grand Island Chamber of Commerce**. **Judy Trent** has been hired full-time as volunteer coordinator. Each year, more than 800 volunteers work the event.

They are reducing their 2020 entertainment budget by $600,000 this year. The 11-day fair takes place August 28 - September 7 with **Wade Shows** running the ride midway.

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

Kalahari Resort reveals Texas resort renderings — page 28 / World's Largest Swimming Lesson — page 31

WhiteWater West provides Czech Republic's first water coaster

AT: *Jeffrey Seifert*
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PASOHLÁVKY, Czechia — **Aqualand Moravia** is set to open one of its largest expansions to date — nearly doubling the size of the outdoor water park. Park investments for 2020 will total nearly a quarter of a billion crowns (US$1.1 million). At the heart of the expansion is a new combination water coaster and constrictor slide from Canada's **WhiteWater West**. The water coaster portion is similar to the record-breaking, slightly larger Massiv water coaster at **Schlitterbahn Galveston** in Texas. The slide at Aqualand adds on a constrictor slide for even more excitement.

The water coaster, known as High Five is nearly 800 feet long. Riders begin by climbing to the top of a 60-foot tower. Pairs of riders are weighed to make sure the combined weight is between 200 to 400 pounds. Once aboard the two-person rafts, thrillseekers will plunge down a first drop that takes them almost all the way to the ground. Water jets then propel the raft uphill nearly 50 feet into a tunneled curve section. From there it is a series of ups and downs as riders experience multiple descents and a total of five uphill blasts. The final blast sends a raft full of riders into the constrictor portion where the tight coiling path has the rafts soaring high into tightly banked turns where they will experience strong positive G-forces before the final splashdown.

"On this slide people will not only ride downwards. Thanks to the water jets they will go up five times," described Tomáš Svoboda from Aqualand Moravia.

The family water slide is outfitted in the Czech national colors of white, red and blue. The slide can handle up to 250 adrenaline lovers per hour and is suitable for kids and adults. It is the first slide of its kind in central Europe.

In addition to the water coaster, a water world for children is also new for 2020. The attraction will offer children's slides, fountains, waterfalls, a water castle and a climbing tower. There will also be multiple pools of varying depths so that children of all ages can learn how to swim. A new refreshment outlet in the area, along with lounge chairs, will give parents the opportunity to relax with a beverage while supervising their children.

The final addition is a new water park entrance opposite the main entrance. Located near the campsite, this will provide easier access for those camping on property. The entrance building will include changing rooms as well.

Aqualand Moravia, which opened in 2013, is built on the site of a geothermal spring that used to be a location for Roman baths. Aqualand has both indoor and outdoor water parks and dozens of pools that are filled with geothermal water at temperatures up to 46˚C (115˚F). The pools range from traditional indoor and outdoor whirlpools, to a wave pool kept at a constant 28˚C (83˚F) and an activity pool for the kids at 30˚C (86˚F). For wellness lovers there are adult saunas and children's saunas, a salt chamber for halotherapy, massages, and lots of hydromineral procedures.

The resort is open year-round and includes the **Aqualand Inn** hotel and conference center, Aqualand campground, multiple restaurants, shops and parking. The High Five water coaster is expected to be operational by the start of the summer season.

The village of Pasohlávky features remains of a Roman fortress that dates back to the 2nd century. The small village, with a population of less than 750 permanent residents, is located on the northern shore of the Nové Mlýny reservoir and is a popular resort, drawing tourists from Prague, Brno and Bratislava in the Czech Republic; as well as tourists from Budapest, Hungary, and Vienna, Austria.

Tourism in the Czech Republic has become increasingly popular with Prague recently recognized as the fifth most visited city in Europe. In addition to the spa towns like Pasohlávky, the country is known for its 14 **UNESCO World Heritage** sites, ancient castles, cathedrals, basilicas and museums.

•**aqualand-moravia.cz**

These concept illustrations show what Aqualand Moravia's new massive slide will look like when it is completed this summer.
COURTESY AQUALAND MORAVIA

Kalahari Resorts reveals design of forthcoming Round Rock location

ROUND ROCK, Texas — Kalahari Resorts recently released new renderings to show what its latest resort and indoor water park will look like come November when it opens in Round Rock, Texas. The 1.5-million-square-foot resort will have a 975-room hotel along with a state-of-the art 200,000-square-foot convention center, six full-service restaurants, a piano bar, full spa, delis, pizzerias and retail space. Also, at the resort is what is claimed to be America's largest indoor water park at 230,000 square feet along with the 80,000-square-foot Tom Foolery's Adventure Park which will feature thrill rides, a ropes course, climbing walls, an indoor zipline, bowling, laser tag and mini golf. Although specific details about the water park attractions have yet to be announced, renderings show a multitude of attractions including a wave pool, lazy river, children's waterplay structure, body slides and raft slides including what appears to be a bowl slide, tornado-style slide and wave wall slide. As is typical with indoor water parks, the slides protrude through the wall of the building with the bulk of slides standing outside of the structure. COURTESY KALAHARI RESORTS

NEWSSPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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On March 7, The **DreamWorks Waterpark** at American Dream opened its doors for a soft opening/sneak peek — 11 days before the official opening. The park was only open Saturday and Sunday of that weekend and because it was a "wet run," ticket prices were reduced by $20 for general admission. During the pre-opening, the Soakin' Safari indoor surfing attraction — normally an upcharge — was free.

Originally scheduled to open November 27, 2019, the park cancelled the opening with just a week's notice when the developer indicated it needed more time. Even with the additional time, the park still won't be completely finished at its grand opening. The luxury cabanas, party rooms, and other amenities will open later in the year.

The mall itself is far from complete, with more stores and "some" dining options expected to open on March 19. At the preview event the only dining options inside the water park were pre-made grab-and-go foods such as sandwiches, wraps, salads and bottled beverages.

•

The council for the city of Hull, England, has released images and named a contractor for the new splash park to be installed at the city's East Park. In addition to a number of playful water jets, the rendition is showing a lengthy paddle stream for kids to splash around in. Similar to a paddle pool, the paddle stream will be a shallow stretch of water that is not deep enough to swim in, but could be used for small paddle boats. **Ustigate Waterplay**, one of the largest aquatic play companies in the U.K., has been contracted to build the splash park. It is expected to open late summer. The splash park replaces an older splash pad that was built in 2008 but was forced to close in 2013 for health reasons. The earlier splash pad did not have adequate filtration and 18 people were sickened. It was later discovered that bird droppings had entered the water system. The new splash park will have a state-of-the-art water filtration system, which will also constantly monitor chemical levels and water quality.

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Two and a half years after **Parque Acuático Las Cascadas** in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, was damaged by Hurricane Maria, the park has finally been allocated funds for repair. The **Federal Emergency Management Agency** (FEMA) has allocated $917,169 to repair the children's pool, wave pool, lazy river, along with infrastructure repairs. The park has been closed since September 2017.

Alex Amparo, federal coordinator of disaster recovery for Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands stated,"We recognize the importance of this project from the point of view of economic, tourist and recreational development for the municipality of Aguadilla and the northwest region of the island. This obligation of funds is the result of the collaborative effort between FEMA, COR3 and the municipality of Aguadilla and is a sign that recovery is progressing along all lines of the disaster. Our commitment remains in providing support to the government of Puerto Rico in its efforts to recover from both Maria and the recent earthquakes."

The city, however, is still waiting for a $30 million settlement from **Mapfre Insurance**. Part of that money was to be used to repair Las Cascades. Fortunately, about 90 percent of the needed repairs to the water park can be completed with the FEMA allocation.

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Sunriver Resort in Sunriver, Oregon, has announced plans to build a 10,000-square-foot aquatics center. Construction has already started on the **Aquatic Center at the Cove** which will feature an indoor pool, waterslide, lazy river and spa. It will also include a poolside bar with full-service wait staff. It will all operate alongside the resort's existing outdoor pool and hot tub area.

"The new Aquatic Center at The Cove will double our summer pool capacity so that our guests have more room to relax, and will give us a new amenity to offer during the winter months and when the weather is cool," said **Tom O'Shea**, managing director at Sunriver Resort, in the news release.

The aquatic center is expected to open May 2021. It is part of five-year, $40 million renovation to the property that includes remodeling of all 190 guest rooms, upgrades to the resort's private airport, horse stables, retail store and golf facility. The latter will receive a new 18-hole putting course.

•

The 30-year-old **Seven Seas Water Park** in Provo, Utah, now under new ownership, has been rebranded as **Splash Summit Water Park**. The 17-acre water park will still operate its 15 waterslides, a 500,000-gallon wave pool and eateries.

According to **Nick Strong**, Splash Summit's spokesman, "In 2019, Seven Peaks refurbished the slides, added new features to the kiddie area, increased water temperature and made other much-needed improvements within the park. These improvements have paved the way for an enhanced guest experience at this iconic water park and we will continue to improve guest experience in 2020 and beyond."

Splash Summit Waterpark is slated to open Saturday, May 23, at 10 a.m. on Memorial Day weekend.

•

Magic City Water Park in Suzano, Sao Paulo, Brazil, recently opened Maverick, a 60-foot-tall waterslide. The double-raft slide starts with a winding tube chute before plunging down a 45-degree incline. The rafts then encounter a wave wall where riders will lose momentum, experience a moment of weightlessness, then slide back down the wall, over a speed bump, before finishing in a splash pool. The slide cost 4 million Reais ($850,000) to design and construct. Magic City's owner says "Maverick," is part of a multi-year investment that will add soccer fields, restaurants, rest areas and an expanded inn on the properties. The Magic City leisure complex is in the middle of the Atlantic Forest, a tropical rain forest which draws 700,000 tourists annually.

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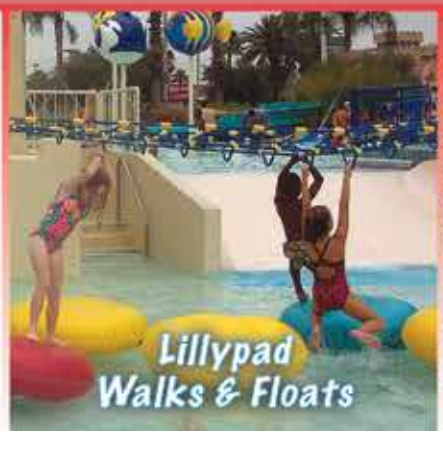
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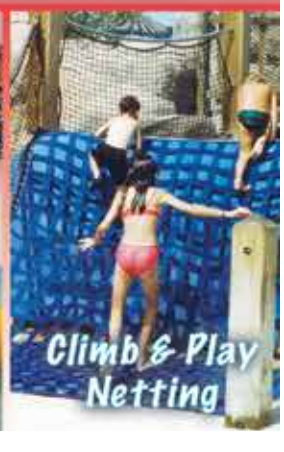
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Water Safety Month leads into World's Largest Swim Lesson

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — In recognition of the popularity of swimming and other water-related recreational activities in the United States, and the resulting need for ongoing public education on safer water practices, the month of May is designated as National Water Safety Month.

A coalition of water safety partners, including the **Pool & Hot Tub Alliance**, the **American Red Cross**, the **World Waterpark Association** and the **National Recreation and Park Association,** along with dozens of water safety groups, have banded together to promote May as National Water Safety Month.

What started as a week-long program in 2003 has now grown into an annual month-long event designed to promote water recreation safety through educational programs, public service announcements, governmental proclamations, dealer and business promotions.

With millions of people drawn to lakes and rivers, public pools and water parks, or home pools and hot tubs, safety is a necessary concern.

People are drawn to the water for leisure, sport, and general outdoor relaxation. Boating with or without motors, swimming, fishing and many other kinds of recreation take place in and around the water, particularly during the summer months.

"National Water Safety Month is a powerful way to send a crucial message at the start of the busy summer swim season," said **Connie Harvey**, director of the **Aquatics Centennial Initiative** for the American Red Cross.

"There are layers of protection involved in water safety. Ensuring everyone in the family learns how to swim and that parents and caregivers have the knowledge and skills to handle emergencies around the water, including how to perform CPR, is a good place to start. National Water Safety Month helps us communicate these messages," added Harvey.

Aside from drownings, facilities and private pool owners need to minimize the risks inherent with an aquatic facility. These include such things as providing proper filtration, testing the water quality, and maintaining clarity to reduce the possibility of recreational water illnesses.

Other factors that need to be taken into account are providing stable surfaces to prevent slips and falls, properly grounding of equipment to prevent electrical shock, providing and maintaining proper covers over pool drains and other pipes to avoid entrapment, and adequate safety steps and monitoring to prevent chemical exposure.

•nationalwatersafetymonth.org

World's Largest Swimming Lesson anticipating global parcipitation

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — The World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL) is a promotional event designed to build awareness and generate local and national press attention about the vital importance of teaching kids to swim to help prevent drowning. Over the years, the World Waterpark association has attracted many organizations and individual aquatic facilities, bringing them together for this important global event.

This year's swim lesson is scheduled to take place on Thursday, June 18, 2020, and registration has officially opened. Organizers are urging aquatic facilities of all types to utilize this global, one-day event to increase awareness in their local communities about the importance of learning to swim.

The worldwide event provides kids and parents exposure to life-saving water safety skills while building awareness about the vital importance of teaching children to swim and for adults to provide undistracted supervision to help prevent drowning.

Although promoted worldwide, the date is near the official start of summer in North America, when most students are out of school, and swimming facilities are kicking into high gear.

The World's Largest Swimming Lesson will take place on six continents. Individual host locations and aquatics providers can conduct the 30-minute lesson any time of day they choose on June 18.

Of course, being safe in and around the water requires more than just swimming lessons. However, learning to swim and the exposure to the water safety skills, and messages that swimming lessons offer, provides a lifelong foundation for drowning prevention.

By joining together, participating facilities can make a positive difference in the lives of children and adults around the world. The event can help drive home the message that learning to swim is as important to general safety as wearing a helmet when riding a bike or wearing a seat belt when riding in a car.

According to an **American Academy of Pediatrics** report, in 2017 drowning claimed the lives of almost 1,000 children under the age of 20 with another 8,700 seen in emergency rooms for non-fatal drowning events.

Per the **World Health Organization**, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death, accounting for seven percent of all injury-related deaths worldwide. In the U.S., drowning remains the leading cause of injury-related death for children ages one to four, and the second leading cause for children under 14.

However, there is reason to hope. Since the WLSL event launched in 2010, the lifesaving message has been shared with more than two billion people in the U.S. alone. Facilities of all kinds are encouraged to join team WLSL in their mission to prevent childhood drowning through education.

Facilities from Galveston, Texas, to Edmonton, Canada; from Dubai, UAE, to Pampanga, Phillipines, will be providing introductory swim lessons to teach children the basics, with the hope of engaging interest to continue to develop their swimming skills. COURTESY WORLD WATERPARK ASSOCIATION

Drowning can happen in seconds but research shows that learning to swim is the strongest defense against drowning.

Research also shows the risk of drowning can be reduced by 88 percent if children participate in formal swimming lessons between the ages of one and four. However, it is never too late to learn how to swim.

Last year, the 2019 WLSL event had 40,603 kids and adults participate at events held in 23 countries.

In its 10-year history The WLSL generated 2,000,000,000 media impressions. Aquatic facilities, from Schlitterbahn Waterpark in Galveston, Texas, to swim schools in India, to locations in Jamaica, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Australia, Philippines, the UAE and India, all taught the same swimming lesson with one goal in mind — send the message swimming lessons save lives.

WLSL is being presented by the World Waterpark Association with support from American Red Cross, ***Amusement Today***, **Aquatics International**, **Instituto de Natacao Infantil**, **Lifeguards Without Borders**, **National Aquatic Safety Company**, **National Drowning Prevention Alliance**, **National Recreation and Park Association**, **Consumer Product Safety Commission's Pool Safely**, **Safe Kids Worldwide**, **Stop Drowning Now**, **Starfish Aquatics Institute**, **Swim Australia**, **USA Swimming Foundation**, **United States Swim School Association**, **Water Safety Products** and many other organizations.

•wlsl.org

BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

▸ Atari announces first hotel — page 34 / New flavors at Universal City Walk Hollywood — page 35

Amusement Expo showcases a hopeful industry in New Orleans

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The showfloor of the Amusement Expo International is seen from on top of the Embed exhibit booth (above). VR experiences such as Triotech's The Storm (below left), laser tag innovations such as the selfie-cam from Laserblast (middle left), augmented reality temporary tattoos from Brand Vending Products (middle right) and the unique Mega Blaster gumball machine/game combo from Amazing Vending Machines (below right with its creator, Alan Guridi) were some highlights on display. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

NEW ORLEANS, La. — Nearly 160 exhibitors were showcasing their wares during the **Amusement Expo International 2020** at the **Earnest N. Morial Convention Center** in New Orleans, Louisiana. This was the event's seventh year utilizing a three-day format — one days of eduction, two days of exhibition — and the event continues to grow.

"It was an exciting three days, starting off with our education seminatrs, our gala and two days on the showfloors," said **Brian Glasgow**, president of **W.T. Glasgow, Inc.**, which managed the Expo. "I talked to a lot of exhibitors about their expectiations and I didn't hear any complaints."

The 2020 Expo featured 495 booths staffed with more than 1,250 non-buyers and exhibitors. There were only a small handful of exhibitors who cancelled due to concerns regarding COVID-19. In addition, 1,306 buyers enjoyed the exhibit floor and all it had to offer.

"The attendance was not the same as it was in Las Vegas," added Glasgow. "However, even with COVID-19 looming over many aspects of the industry, our numbers are up by 20% when compared to our 2017 Expo in Dallas, Texas, which was the last time the Expo was held outside of Las Vegas."

Even with lower attendance, vendors seemed very pleased with the reception from buyers.

"It genuinely feels like everyone who is here has made the trip with reason and purpose," said **Christian Saghbini**, **Triotech**'s director of sales operations. The company was exhibiting their popular VR game The Storm, which debuted at IAAPA Expo 2019. The unique game mixes a coaster-riding VR experience with competitive coin-collecting gameplay. "This has definitely been an experience of quality over quantity."

Video games, VR arenas, cashless solutions, automated games and unique vending products were among the items showcased during the combined trade show of the **American Amusement Machine Association** (AAMA) and the **Amusement & Music Operators Association** (AMOA).

For the ninth year, the event was colocated with the **National Bulk Vendors Association**. In addition, the 16 exhibitors and 29 booths of the **Laser Tag Convention** embraced the synergy of colocating with the Amusement Expo. Some of the latest innovations in laser tag were on display.

"Our guns have added a selfie camera on the back," said **Mike Ewald**, sales director of **Laserblast**. "Once a player is suited-up, they can grab a quick photo of themselves that displays on the scoreboard outside the arena. In addition, whenever they're hit by another opponent, the screen on the gun will display the photo of who delivered the shot."

Whether it was adding more players per square foot, as **Amusement Products** did by unveiling a six-player VR arena, or enabling guests to play and recharge their mobile gaming cards all through their personal smartphone as **Embed** showcased with its Mobile Wallet, increased interactivity was a consistent theme throughout the Expo. Even vending products were taking the guest experience to the next level.

"The new 4D Tattoo Tower makes tattoos come to life," said **Scott Jochim** of **Brand Vending Products**. "It's a digital bridge between the physical product and the video games that kids love, all in one product on your rack."

Not all of the interactive product offering were overly high tech. New to the exhibit floor was **Magnetag**, demonstrating its new product which allows classic toys to take on a whole new life for kids and guests.

"Rather than have guests running around with VR helmets on, we wanted to take advantage of what was already in front of them," stated **Adam Cohen**, creator of Magnetag. The system utilizes targets, magnets and safe foam toys for kids to engage in duels and play combat, all with an innovative scoring mechanism. "With Magnetag, guests can have the childhood fun of a swordfight, Nerf darts and more all in a safe game that keeps score for them."

Recognizing some of the best the Expo had to offer, the AMOA Innovator Award was presented to **LAI Games** for their Hyperpitch product. In addition, **Embed**, **Nayax** and **Touchtunes** received Operator's Choice Awards during the event for their innovative offerings.

Wild Island Family Adventure Park of Sparks Nevada, was presented the FEC of the Year Award from the AAMA. The association also presented **Raw Thrills** with its Manufacturer of the Year Award, **Rhode Island Novelty** with its Supplier of the Year Award and **Shaffer Distributing** with the Distributor of the Year Award.

In 2021, the Amusement Expo International will return to Las Vegas, Nevada. It will be held March 16-18, 2021, at the **Westgate Las Vegas** and **Las Vegas Convention Center**.

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Allied enters joint venture with McGowan, moves headquarters

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Members of Allied Specialty Insurance paused at the Gibtown show before the joint venture with McGowan Insurance (above left, from left):: Annie Shugart, Shauna Martinez, Stephanie Moore, Marianne Hochmuth, Lisa Cummings, Brandee Mellert, Glenn Harris, Kym Tormey, Carol Serra, Joplin Taylor and Denise Waterhouse. Since 1983, Allied Specialty Insurance had been located in a five-story location in Treasure Island, until a recent move to the Franklin Temple Center, St. Petersburg (right). AT/B. DEREK SHAW; COURTESY ALLIED SPECIALTY INSURANCE

ST PETERSBURG, Fla. — Announced February 11, and retroactive back to January 1, 2020, **Allied Specialty Insurance**, a subsidiary of **AXA XL's P&C** and specialty risk division and **McGowan Companies** have created a joint venture known as **McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance**. Both insurers have had a long-standing presence in the outdoor event and entertainment industry and will concentrate on carnival, fair and other event insurance.

Thomas B. McGowan, IV is president/CEO of McGowan Allied. Lee Stacey, formerly of **McGowan Amusement**, will head McGowan Allied, collaborating with **Kym Tormey**, president (AXA XL), McGowan Allied, in the day-to-day management of this new joint venture.

"Individually Allied and McGowan have built strong reputations in the amusement and entertainment industries. Now, with McGowan Allied, we're pulling together our underwriting expertise, industry experience, and resources so that we can leverage our collective strength to support and strengthen our clients' risk management plans," said McGowan. "Together, we're creating a risk management resource that's unmatched in this market."

"This joint venture presents an exciting opportunity for our current and future clients," said Tormey. "Our resources and service will be unmatched in the marketplace; our combined workforces are the best our industry has to offer and our ability to create new products quickly and nimbly is something our competitors just don't have the ability to do."

McGowan Allied will be introducing numerous new products to the market, however, they just launched two — Workplace Violence and Active Shooter Insurance. "Both coverages are critical purchases for fairs and carnivals, especially considering the increasing number of random acts of violence perpetrated against soft targets," said Tormey.

While a beach front location can be a plus, **McGowan Allied Specialty Insurance** recently vacated its five-story location in Treasure Island to the Franklin Temple Center, 140 Fountain Parkway, in downtown St. Petersburg, closer to where the action is. "One of the things that we are known for is trying to attract the best talent. We think that the talent pool there is great. We also think while it is really sad to leave the beach because that is a wonderful location; we wanted to bring the team in to a more modern space," said Tormey.

Annie Shugart, marketing and client relations coordinator, said, "The building has a work-out facility and a cafeteria — a fresh new space being built for us, for our team. The beach is great, it is hard to get to."

"Not many people can get to have an office on the beach, so it was a nice talking point. I think our new talking point is that it is new, fresh, clean, modern — it's just a nice change," said Tormey. Shugart added, "I think it's wonderful that they are investing in us in this space. That shows commitment is what it is saying. We are very committed to the industry and that hasn't changed."

The McGowan Companies is one of the oldest, largest and most respected organizations of its type in the United States. Based in Fairview Park, Ohio, it is a leading insurance intermediary in the United States, with a multi-generational, family-owned and operated conglomerate of more than fifty insurance brokers, wholesalers, programs/program administrators, and reinsurance intermediaries. Allied Specialty Insurance had been located in Treasure Island since 1983 when the company was founded by **Paul "Duke" Smith** and more recently run by **Mary Crist Smith**, who retired late last year.

PAPA spring meeting again held at the sweetest place on Earth

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At left, Dick Knoebel with 50/50 raffle tickets in hand was ready to go as attendees picked up their name badge. Looking on are (l to r): Ramon Rosario, Zamperla, Inc.; Jeanne Reedy, Knoebels Amusement Resort; and Sueann Bradley, Hersheypark. At right, the Fasnacht family turned out to support Al Fasnacht (holding plaque) being inducted into the PAPA Hall of Fame. Since 1962, the Fasnacht family members, many of whom are in the picture, have owned and operated Funland of Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

HERSHEY, Pa. – One hundred nine members and guests of the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions Association (PAPA)** met February 25 and 26 for their spring meeting at **Hershey Lodge and Convention Center**. Participation was comprised of member parks and attractions, suppliers and manufacturers and individual members. The organization strives to foster an environment where industry peers can gather and learn from one another.

The first day started with a board of directors meeting in the afternoon followed by a reception and banquet that evening. Both the board meeting and evening proceedings were led by **Brian Gorman**, VP of operations of **Waldameer Park & Water World**, serving as the 2019-20 PAPA president.

Inducted into the PAPA Hall of Fame was **Al Fasnacht**, co-owner of **Funland**, Rehoboth, Delaware. His family has owned the seaside amusement park since 1962 and continues to operate with second to fifth generation members. When not at the park, the family resides in Hershey. Commenting on the presentation, Gorman said, "He brought a lot of his family. I had never met Al before. [This certainly is] quite a legacy he has led in Pennsylvania (now defunct **Willow Mill Amusement Park**) and also down at Rehoboth Beach. We were pleased to have him here in person to accept the award." Fasnacht is the 13th individual to be inducted into the Hall of Fame behind others such as **John Allen**, **Milton Hershey, Harold Chance** and **Bob Cassata**.

The organization again held a 50/50 raffle for its scholarship fund. As a result, $500 was raised for the **Barbara J. Knoebel Scholarship Fund**. The winner, **Buddy Knoebel** donated his portion back to the fund. Each year seven $1,000 scholarships are awarded to students who work at any of the participating member parks/attractions. Upon conclusion of dinner, many attendees retired to the Revelry Bar and/or lobby lounge to continue networking and imbibing.

The second day started with the annual breakfast membership meeting. Association business included reports in various aspects of the industry: legislative updates, Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board, a recap of the fall **PACE (Parks and Carnivals Education)** ride safety seminar, waterpark issues, PAPA website and human resource matters. PAPA Treasurer **Dick Knoebel** amended his standard report by adding one additional word, "We are very solvent!"

Gorman, looking back on the two-day event said, "we always enjoy everyone's company and sharing ideas. We had a productive board meeting, mostly centered on the minimum wage legislation that's moving through our state government [SB79]. Other things involved mostly HR topics such as staffing. It's been a struggle for a lot of facilities to staff [adequately]. I was really happy with the amount of people who were able to attend this year. A lot of manufacturers came. We appreciate their support to sponsor the meeting and organization."

Upon conclusion of the meeting, 37 attendees participated in the roundtable discussions in the Hersheypark employee cafeteria, Coaster Café, and later moved to the Service Center Conference Room. This is the ninth year the roundtables have been held. The discussion, coordinated by **Scott Silar**, manager of attractions at Hersheypark, covered the entire gamut. Topics included unhappy guests and compensation policies, mommy bloggers — social media influencers, $15 minimum wage, security operations, employee recognition and retention ideas, school starts, best promotions, using volunteer groups and more. "Peer facilities discussed topics that affect their entities as challenges while taking time to celebrate successes," said Silar.

•paamusementparks.com

Miral, Warner Bros. link for studio-themed lodge in Abu Dhabi

Hotel rising next to Yas Island's Warner Bros. World theme park

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The world's first Warner Bros.-branded hotel, The WB Abu Dhabi will offer services and activities for leisure seekers and business travelers. More than 250 premium rooms, including the contemporary-styled Junior Suite (shown), will accommodate guests.
COURTESY MIRAL/WARNER BROS. CONSUMER PRODUCTS

ABU DHABI, UAE — Resort and attractions developer **Miral** is teaming with **Warner Bros.** on a new hotel themed after the Hollywood studio on Yas Island, adjacent to the award-winning **Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi** indoor theme park.

Slated to open in 2021, **The WB Abu Dhabi** is the world's first Warner Bros.-branded hotel. Construction on the $112 million project was more than half complete at the start of this year. It will be a major addition to Yas Island's array of hospitality, entertainment and leisure options.

The hotel, with more than 250 guest rooms on eight levels, will offer Warner Bros. fans, vacationers and business travelers premium amenities and modern decor inspired by the studio's brand portfolio — including its extensive film and television library.

"This is yet another step in our journey to position Yas Island as one of the top global destinations for entertainment, leisure and business," said **H.E. Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak**, chairman of Miral. "Our partnership with Warner Bros. is a unique collaboration that adds another dimension to the outstanding immersive experiences available on Yas Island."

"Following the successful debut of Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, we are thrilled to expand our presence in the region with the studio's first-ever branded hotel," said **Pam Lifford**, president of **Warner Bros. Global Brands and Experiences**. "This new venture will pay tribute to Warner Bros.' legacy of rich entertainment, offering fans a unique way to experience their favorite brands and characters."

The WB Abu Dhabi will feature signature WB restaurants, a spa, a fully equipped fitness club, a beauty parlor and a shaded rooftop pool where guests can take in Yas Island's distinctive skyline. It will also incorporate all the facilities business and leisure guests could need, including a large ballroom and adaptable, well-appointed meeting rooms.

A child-friendly pool and indoor and outdoor Kid's Club activities are among the family offerings.

In addition to the two Warner Bros.-branded properties, Yas Island is home to **Ferrari World Abu Dhabi** theme park, **Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi** water park, a golf course, a major mall, a marina and seven hotels.

•miral.ae

First Atari-branded gameplay hotel to break ground in Phoenix

Immersive fun will include VR and AR activities for families

AT: *Dean Lamanna*
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

The Arizona flagship location of the planned Atari Hotels chain will be enwrapped with the video game company's iconic logo. Among its family-friendly games and amenities will be a rooftop observation and entertainment area.
COURTESY ATARI HOTELS

PHOENIX — The state of play in Arizona's capital will be reaching new heights with the arrival of the first high-rise gaming destination in a planned **Atari Hotels** chain.

The project, expected to break ground around the middle of this year, follows the acquisition of lodge-branding rights by **GSD Group** from Atari, the iconic video game and consumer entertainment company. The resort will offer immersive game experiences for family members of every age and ability, including activities featuring the latest in virtual and augmented reality. Select properties in the eventual chain also are expected to feature state-of-the-art esports venues.

Shelly Murphy, GSD's founder / CEO, and partner **Napoleon Smith III**, producer of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* franchise reboot, are leading the hotel development and design effort. Phoenix real estate developer **True North Studio**, working alongside GSD with **Apple, Inc.**, cofounder **Steve Wozniak**'s **Woz Innovation Foundation**, is part of the team developing the Arizona project.

"When creating this brand-new hotel concept, we knew that Atari would be the perfect way to give guests the 'nostalgic and retro meets modern' look and feel we were going for," Smith said. "Let's face it, how cool will it be to stay inside an Atari [game]?"

Added Murphy: "Atari Hotels will be the first of their kind in the U.S., offering gamers of all ages the ultimate in immersive entertainment and in every aspect of gaming. We're excited to be working on this project with such great partners and to bring a big win to Arizona."

According to the project team, some 2.5 billion gamers around the globe spent more than $152.1 billion on games in 2019 — representing a year-on-year increase of 9.6%. One of the most distinctive trends in the sector finds gamers gravitating toward recognizable intellectual property. With that in mind, the team's aim with Atari Hotels is to marry the origins of gaming and the future of a booming industry into a fun and unique travel destination.

"We are thrilled to partner with GSD Group and True North Studio to build the first-ever Atari branded hotels, and together we'll build a space that will be much more than just a place to stay," said **Fred Chesnais**, CEO of Atari. "Atari is an iconic global brand that resonates with people of all ages, countries, cultures and ethnic backgrounds, and we cannot wait for our fans and their families to enjoy this new hotel concept."

Atari reportedly received a $600,000 advance in the deal, which calls for the company to receive 5% of the revenue from the hotels.

Since its introduction in 1972, Atari has grown into an international provider of multi-platform, interactive entertainment and licensed products. Atari owns and / or manages a portfolio of more than 200 games and franchises, including the famous arcade and home system games *Asteroids*, *Centipede*, *Missile Command*, *Pong* and *Rollercoaster Tycoon*.

Additional locations in the Atari Hotels chain are planned for Las Vegas, Denver, Chicago, Austin, Seattle, San Francisco and San Jose, California.

•atarihotels.com

Hangout coming to Broadway at the Beach

COURTESY BROADWAY AT THE BEACH

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — Broadway at the Beach announced the addition of The Hangout. The restaurant, retail and entertainment venue will be the first new addition to the entertainment district currently under construction at the southeast corner of the property.

Scheduled to open in late 2020, The Hangout's menu will spotlight seasonal seafood dishes, beachside burgers, sandwiches and tacos, appetizers and sides made from locally sourced ingredients prepared from scratch. It will offer live music year-round on indoor and outdoor stages. The 40,000-square-foot destination will include a retail store, unique art installations as well as other interactive and creative installations.

ZAMPERLA
THE AMUSEMENT GROUP

Zamperla debuts new logo

VICENTINA, Italy — Ride supplier Zamperla debuted an updated logo in February. The new logo, an evolution of their previous branding, was announced via a special video on Zamperla.com. The Italy-based ride manufacturer is scheduled to debut several new rides this coming season at Coney Island's Luna Park in Brooklyn, New York. In addition, Six Flags Fiesta Texas is readying a Zamperla Super Air Race — dubbed Dare Devil Dive Flying Machines — for a 2020 debut. COURTESY ZAMPERLA

Bold new tastes lead the way at Universal CityWalk Hollywood

Ethnic flavors, sweet treats await visitors at lively promenade

AT: *Dean Lamanna*
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

The latest foodie talk at Universal CityWalk centers on the recent arrivals of Antojitos Cocina Mexicana (above), an artfully appointed eatery serving fine Mexican cuisine, and Vivo Italian Kitchen, featuring family heirloom recipes prepared in an open kitchen. COURTESY UNIVERSAL CITYWALK HOLLYWOOD

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. — Twenty-seven years ago, **Universal Studios Hollywood** revolutionized the concept of retailtainment with the unveiling of **Universal CityWalk**, a vibrant, three-block-long promenade lined with restaurants, sweet shops, specialty retail outlets, movie theaters and performers. And it has continued to revitalize itself as both a standalone attraction and an appetite-whetting warmup to the theme park.

Already home to fun-themed food and treat spots such as **Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.**, **Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville**, **Popcornopolis** and **Voodoo Doughnut**, CityWalk has bolstered its fine cuisine offerings with two recent restaurant openings: **Antojitos Cocina Mexicana** and **Vivo Italian Kitchen**. Helmed by seasoned executive chefs, the eateries invite guests to savor culinary concepts for more discerning palates.

Situated in the heart of CityWalk, Antojitos Cocina Mexicana lures hungry passersby with incandescent bulb-style signage, specially commissioned murals and traditional Mexican décor in bold hues of orange, green and pink. The color extends to the fresh ingredients favored by Executive Chef **Gian Caterina**, who presents them diced, marinated and grilled in a variety of creative ways.

Menu highlights include Guacamole Trio and Chips, featuring pomegranate guacamole with queso fresco and pepita guacamole with jalapeños and lime salt; Carnitas Nachos (crispy pork carnitas); Queso Fundido (melted Oaxaca, Chihuahua and cotija cheeses); Chicharrones de Pollo (crispy chicken bites flavored with chili lime salt); Elote (street corn) and Sopa de Tortilla.

Tacos made from hand-pressed tortillas are delivered with flair. They include Carne Asada (tequila marinated steak), Al Pastor (tender pork), Pollo (achiote braised chicken), Chorizo con Papas (ground chorizo with crispy potatoes), Birra de Res (six-hour braised beef) and Baja Snapper (crispy fish). All are served with Mexican crema, refried or black beans, and Mexican red rice.

Enchiladas are available in Molé (braised chicken), Rojas (braised beef) and Verdes (blended Mexican cheese) flavors. Among the dessert offerings are the Chocolate Hazelnut Cream Bar; a trio of Coconut, Pear and Mango Sorbet; traditional Flan and Churros.

The restaurant also caters to dietary restrictions and offers vegetarian options

Entertainment throughout the indoor / outdoor dining space at Antojitos is provided by local Latin artists and mariachi bands. The bar features over 150 tequilas from around the world, handcrafted cocktails and margaritas, and cold cervezas served on tap.

Vivo Italian Kitchen, located adjacent to **Sephora**, provides a more sleek, modern setting with an open and dynamic food preparation area. Family heirloom recipes are the focus.

Featuring both indoor and al fresco dining, and offering lunch and dinner menus, Vivo's fine food is created by Executive Chef **Cyndi Tran**, whose specialties include Tuscan kale and white bean soup, creamy garlic mushroom sauté, mussels marina, house-made meatballs, hearth-baked pizza, a variety of paninis and some twists on classic pasta favorites.

Warm, chewy house-made Italian bread graces each table. The dessert menu features ricotta cheesecake, tiramisu and gelato — all accompanied by rosemary-infused butter cookies.

A full bar offers a variety of Italian-inspired cocktails in addition to a broad wine selection.

Still more food and treat options are in store at CityWalk. Set to open this year, **NBC Sports Grill & Brew**, located next to Antojitos, will offer a fresh take on pub food and a wide selection of regional and draft brews in addition to more than 100 high-definition TV screens broadcasting sports. And coming next year, **Toothsome Chocolate Emporium & Savory Feast Kitchen** promises plenty of eye candy along with the real, confectionary thing, plus brunch, lunch and dinner menus.

• citywalkhollywood.com

Women INFLUENCE

Kim Samarelli

Executive Director
New Jersey Attractions Association
Seaside Heights, N.J.

A view from the top...

Kim Samarelli has been the executive director of the **New Jersey Attractions Association** (NJAA) for 15 years. As a lifelong member and worker in the amusement park industry, becoming the NJAA executive director was a natural progression for her. The NJAA is a pro-active organization, identifying concerns, while working for the safety, health and overall economic betterment of the amusement industry.

Accomplishments and affiliations...

- **Ocean County SPCA: Ocean County, New Jersey, 2016-present, active board member**
- **Hospitality Committee Ocean County College, New Jersey, 2014-present, active board member**
- **Business Advisory Committee, 2012-present, active board member**

Samarelli refuses to slow down

SEASIDE HEIGHTS, N.J. — Kim Samarelli was raised in the amusement park industry...more accurately she was raised in Jenkinson's Boardwalk, Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey. She is a park industry fourth generation.

She has many memories from those early years on the New Jersey coast. But, perhaps, her earliest and clearest memories were those that ended up with her grandfather getting aggravated with her.

"My grandfather had skill games," Samarelli said. "I would sit in the middle of the game...I was a cute little girl with blond pigtails. I loved taking the quarters and shoving them into the counter. Every time I did that, it would click. I loved to hear it click. So, I would push the quarters down over and over again just to hear the clicking.

"My grandfather would get so aggravated. He would say our count is going to be so off."

In those early days, Samarelli said her family participated in a variety of businesses involving the industry on the Jersey shore.

"For a while, we had a beach umbrella rental business," she said. "My father was a beach boy. He would go out and set up the umbrellas."

Her father, Fritz Rolle, also had games on the boardwalk and eventually entered into a partnership with Pasquale "Pat" Storino, who had purchased the park from the Jenkinson family in the late 1970s.

Samarelli had her own park duties as she grew up. When she was 15 years old, she got her first real job. She worked in food concessions.

The amusement park industry along the Jersey shore during those times was very seasonal, from Memorial Day to Labor Day right along the school schedule.

Samarelli worked every summer.

"There was no social life, no vacations," she said.

But she never felt like she missed out on anything during those warm months. Her friends were all working, too.

Samarelli had decided years before she graduated from high school that she would be the first in her family to get a college degree. She began that quest at a school in Tampa, Florida, but transferred back home to the Georgian Court College in Lakewood, New Jersey.

In 1992, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. It was an exciting time for her and her family. But she didn't stop with that degree. She jumped right into graduate study in business at Georgian Court College. By 2000, she had earned her Masters in Administration.

Even during her college years, Samarelli worked summers at Jenkinson's.

"For a brief moment, I thought I might try a job in corporate America, but I decided I didn't want to be away from my family," she said. "Being the first person in my family that graduated from college, I was very excited to bring back some of the things I had learned. It was very empowering."

After earning her masters degree, when summer was gone, Samarelli had thoughts of being a high school principal. But she learned there was a hierarchy and she would have to teach first. So, instead, she earned a Certificate of Eligibility School Business Administrator in 2002.

The next year, she opened a business called Seashore Delights, an ice cream shop, in Lavallett, New Jersey. The business was a hit, but, again, when the summer was over, she found she had time on her hands.

Having too much spare time isn't in Samarelli's playbook.

In 2005, she became an adjunct professor at Ocean County College, Toms River, New Jersey. Fifteen years later, she is still teaching courses such as resume writing, marketing, human resources, accounting, hospitality, recreation, tourism, promotions, contracts and ethics in business.

Samarelli and her family's involvement in the NJAA goes back many years. So, when in 2005, the association began a search for an executive director, she applied and got the job. And, after 15 years, she is still doing that, too.

The one thing that is not in her life right now is the business she started in 2003.

"I ended up selling my business right after Hurricane Sandy," she said.

Hurricane Sandy hit the New Jersey shore hard in 2012.

"I left the island about 12 hours before it hit," she said. "I was back out there within 48 hours. My home and my ice cream shop washed away. The park industry here was really upside down. It was devastating."

But the amusement park industry on the New Jersey shore was not alone in their fight. Samarelli said even a long time after the event, when it became old news for people in other areas of the country, the entire amusement park industry kept reaching out to those that had been affected.

"Everyone worked together. This industry took a tragedy and turned it around."

Samarelli said she has always loved the amusement park industry. She has always loved the people. Hurricane Sandy just reminded her why.

She concentrated her efforts supporting her colleagues through the NJAA as they pulled their lives back together after the storm. And has continued to do so whatever she can.

Samarelli said she loves the amusement park industry for one other reason, too.

"Every day is different," she said. "Today will not be like yesterday and tomorrow will not be like today."

—Pam Sherborne

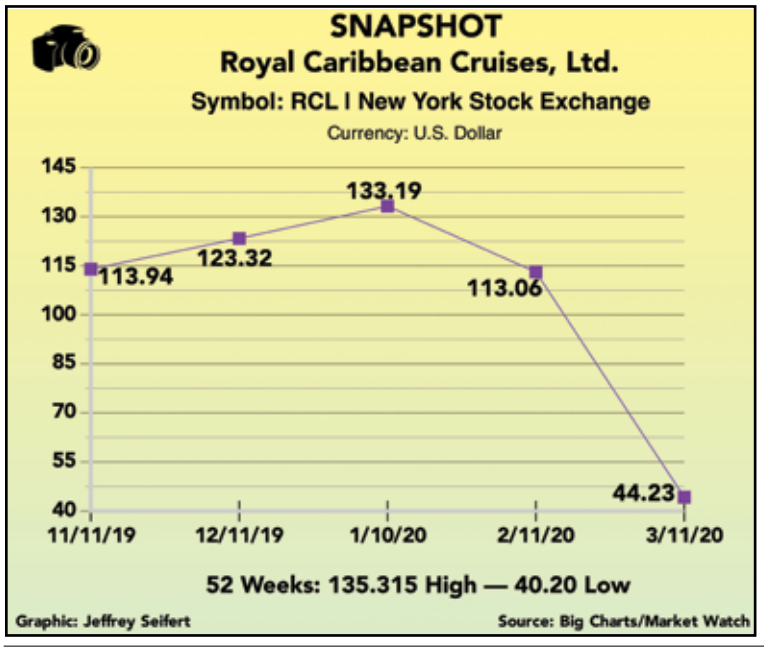
MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 03/11/20	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	47.35	64.97	33.6
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	29.25	64.86	28.15
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	37.91	47.74	36.66
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	105.51	153.41	102.43
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.13	0.27	0.12
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	44.23	80.75	44.22
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	2499.00	4830.00	2316.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.72	1.86	0.67
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	11.95	17.00	10.87
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	18.08	34.64	17.53
Royal Carribean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	44.37	135.31	40.20
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	681.00	1603.00	654.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	15.89	36.96	14.9
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	17.32	59.52	17
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	680.00	788.00	650.00
Village Roadshow	AU:VRL	ASX	3.07	4.1	2.30

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

Worldwide Markets: ASX, Australian Securities Exchange; **CSE**, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; **LSE**, London Stock Exchange; **NYSE**, New York Stock Exchange; **NASDAQ**, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; **SEHK**, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; **SZSE**, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; **TSEC**, Taiwan Stock Excange, Corp.; **TYO/TSE**, Tokyo Stock Exchange

—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 03/09/20	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	$2.860	-$0.263
Midwest	$2.689	-$0.322
Gulf Coast	$2.577	-$0.304
Mountain	$2.803	-$0.136
West Coast	$3.026	-$0.136
California	$3.705	-$0.073

CURRENCY

On 03/12/20 $1 USD =	
0.8809	EURO
0.7691	GBP (British Pound)
104.39	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9339	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.5296	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3688	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Cedar Fair reports record fourth-quarter net

SANDUSKY, Ohio — **Cedar Fair Entertainment Co.** (NYSE: FUN) reported record net revenues for its full-year and fourth-quarter 2019 results. The results are not directly comparable with full-year 2018, as 2019 includes results from the operations of two **Schlitterbahn** water parks the company acquired last July; for purposes of same-park discussions, data excludes the results of the Schlitterbahn parks. Net revenues increased 9% to a record $1.47 billion; same-park net revenues were up 6%. Attendance at parks increased 8% to a record 27.9 million guests; same-park attendance increased 5%. In-park per capita spending increased 1% to a record $48.32; in-park per capita spending on a same-park basis was up 1%. Out-of-park revenues were up 11% to a record $169 million; same-park out-of-park revenues increased 8%. Net income increased 36%, or $46 million, to $172 million, while on a same-park basis, net income increased 27%, or $34 million.

SeaWorld sees attendance increases in 2019

ORLANDO — **SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.** (NYSE: SEAS) announced its financial results for the fourth quarter and fiscal year 2019. In the fourth quarter, attendance increased 2.2%, to 4.7 million guests from the fourth quarter of 2018. Total revenue increased by $18 million, or 6.4%, to $298 million from the fourth quarter of 2018. Net loss increased by $13.1 million, to $24.2 million from the fourth quarter of 2018. In fiscal 2019, attendance increased 0.2%, to 22.6 million guests from fiscal 2018. Total revenue increased by $26.0 million, or 1.9%, to $1.4 billion from fiscal 2018. Net income increased by $44.7 million, or 99.8%, to a record $89.5 million from fiscal 2018.

Six Flags announces full-year 2019 earnings

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** (NYSE: SIX) reported that its 2019 revenue increased $24 million, or 2%, from 2018 to approximately $1.5 billion. The revenue growth was primarily driven by a 2% increase in attendance, offset by a slight decline in guest spending per capita and a 3% decline in sponsorship, international agreements and accommodations revenue. Attendance at the company's parks in 2019 grew by 788,000 to 32.8 million guests, primarily driven by five domestic parks the company began operating last June, and the company's new water park in Rockford, Illinois, which began operating in April 2019. Admissions per capita decreased $0.44 to $24.86, and in-park spending per capita increased $0.23 to $17.51. Net income for the year ended Dec. 31 was $179 million — a decrease of $97 million, or 35%, compared to the prior year. In other Six Flags news, the company announced a multiyear marketing partnership with **The Kraft Heinz Co.** and its portfolio of food products.

Palace Entertainment shifting park ops east

WEST MIFFLIN, Pa. — **Palace Entertainment**, the parent company of **Kennywood**, **Lake Compounce**, **Dutch Wonderland**, and **Idlewild & SoakZone**, among others, has begun establishing a permanent support facility in Greater Pittsburgh. The move will bring roughly 25 professional and executive-level positions, including company COO **John Reilly**, to the area, and it reaffirms Palace's commitment to the parks it operates in the northeastern U.S. The facility will initially be located in Pittsburgh's eastern suburbs until a permanent base on property the company owns near Kennywood is opened within the next several years. Palace will maintain a base of operations in its existing Newport Beach, California, location, with its finance and information technology departments remaining primarily on the West Coast.

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OBITUARIES

Robert Boykin, voice of state fair's Big Tex

DALLAS — Robert "Bob" Boykin, who provided the voice of Big Tex, the 55-foot-tall mascot of the State Fair of Texas, died Jan. 23. He was 73.

Boykin was the sixth person in the fair's history to play the anonymous role.

Born in Dallas in 1946 and raised in Richardson, Boykin graduated from high school in North Texas. He worked as an announcer for Green Valley Raceway to put himself through college at Arlington State College (now the University of Texas at Arlington.) He joined the U.S. Marine Corps and eventually settled into a 40-plus-year career at Lockheed Martin.

Boykin

Boykin auditioned to supply the voice of Big Tex following the 2012 edition of the State Fair of Texas, beating more than 150 applicants. He enjoyed watching the fair crowds and seeing the look on children's faces the first time they saw the towering cowboy.

Boykin was a lifetime member of the Shriners and was a Freemason. He is survived by his wife of more than 10 years, Terri, in addition to family, friends and five Great Pyrenees dogs.

Fred DelGrosso, amusement park cofounder

TIPTON, Pa.— Frederick Joseph "Fred" DelGrosso, a founder of DelGrosso's Amusement Park & Laguna Splash Water Park and one of the owners of the DelGrosso Family of Companies, passed away Feb. 9.

DelGrosso

"Fred was a son, brother, father, grandfather, uncle and friend," the DelGrosso family stated in a Facebook post. "For countless foodies around the country, he is best known as the creator of Uncle Fred's Fireworks Sauce, a recipe he created over 30 years ago for family and friends. Fred's happiest moments involved treasured family meals with delicious food. His legacy now lives on with his family."

DelGrosso was one of seven siblings and leaves behind six children.

Angelica L. 'Big Ang' Ward, Wheelock Rides

PLANT CITY, Fla. — Angelica L. "Big Ang" Ward of Syracuse, New York-based Wheelock Rides died unexpectedly Feb. 13 while in Florida. She was 49.

Born in Syracuse, Ward graduated from West Genesee High School in 1988 and later from Central City Business Institute. A jack of all trades, she worked for Wheelock Rides her entire life.

Ward

Ward was the 2004 Work Horse of the Year and the 2012 Show Person of Year for the New York State Showpeople's Assn., serving as the organization's president from 2010-12. In addition, she maintained memberships in the Outdoor Amusement Business Assn., International Independent Showmen's Assn. and National Independent Concessionaires Assn. Ward is survived by her husband of 26 years, Corey; sons Cody and Cameron; daughter Allison; brothers Avery, Arthur and Alan G. Wheelock; father Avery Wheelock; many nieces and nephews; and her five dogs. She was predeceased by her mother, Alice, in 2002.

Karen C. Wasmund, park owner and operator

ANGOLA, N.Y. — Karen C. Wasmund, who owned and operated an amusement park with her husband, passed away Jan. 29. She was 76.

Born Karen Clair Drescher in 1943, she grew up in East Aurora and was a 1961 graduate of East Aurora High School. She met her husband, Ronald E. Wasmund, a backhoe operator, on a visit to Crystal Beach amusement park. They were married in 1962.

Wasmund

The Wasmunds operated Leisure Land Amusement Park in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the 1980s, Karen started a crafting business, The Family Affair, which she and her daughters operated for more than three decades.

A longtime member of the Lake Erie Beach Volunteer Fire Co. Ladies Auxiliary, Wasmund also served as a historian, recording secretary and school bus attendant.

In addition to her husband, Wasmund is survived by four daughters; a brother; 12 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

ON THE MOVE

Mary Baerg has joined **Space Center Houston** as its new COO. She is responsible for the nonprofit science and space exploration learning center's exhibits, finance, education, facilities, safety and security, and guest operations. Specializing in guest and team engagement and program strategy, Baerg has more than 25 years of combined experience in the museum and communications fields and the space industry. Previously, she was the chief experience officer for the **Perot Museum of Nature and Science** in Dallas and fulfilled multiple operational roles at the **Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County**. Baerg also served as duty lead for the Mars Public Engagement team at **NASA**'s **Jet Propulsion Laboratory** in Pasadena, California.

Baerg

Steve Bell, business solutions architect at **Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc.**, of Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania, has been selected to serve on the 2020 **IAAPA North American Regional Advisory Committee**. Bell's 18 years of attractions industry experience, including 10 years with Gateway and three years volunteering with IAAPA, gives him the insight to represent the interests and priorities of the attractions industry. During his one-year term, he will help IAAPA create regional events and membership forums as well as educational and networking opportunities. In addition, Bell will continue to serve on the **IAAPA North American Manufacturers and Suppliers Sub-Committee**.

Bell

Area15, an experiential art, retail and entertainment complex slated to open in Las Vegas this fall, is partnering with world-renowned chef and restaurateur **Todd English**. English will create a customized menu exclusively for the attraction's as-yet-unnamed food hall, a casual dining experience set within an immersive environment offering large-scale art installations, music and performances. A four-time **James Beard** Award winner, English has authored six cookbooks, created The Todd English Collection housewares line and hosted the **PBS** television series *Food Trip with Todd English*.

English

George Frantzis III has been named human resources director at **Quassy Amusement & Waterpark** in Middlebury, Connecticut. He previously served as ride supervisor at the 112-year-old lakeside fun spot from 2010-15 before exploring other opportunities. Frantzis, 27, is among fourth-generation family members working at the property, which was purchased by his great-grandfather, **John Frantzis**, along with two business partners in 1937. Today, the park is wholly owned by the Frantzis and **Anderson** families, who reside locally and oversee day-to-day operations of the seasonal business.

Frantzis

Global entertainment design and immersive entertainment company **Forrec** of Toronto has hired Emmy-nominated producer **David Kenneth** as executive producer at the company's media studio. Kenneth began his career in live-action production before moving into postproduction, visual effects, computer-generated (CG) animation and, ultimately, themed entertainment. In his new role, Kenneth, based in Los Angeles, will take the lead in extending Forrec's offerings across media production. He will also provide creative and technical direction as well as management of the production studio — enhancing FORREC's ability to offer clients fully integrated experiences from concept to delivery. Kenneth's professional affiliations include the **Producers Guild of America** and the **Visual Effects Society**.

Kenneth

Legoland California Resort in Carlsbad, California, has named **Kurt Stocks** its new general manager. Stocks, a native of Australia and former professional rugby player, joins the 20-year-old, three-gate family resort from **Legoland Malaysia Resort**, where he served in the same position. His experience includes more than 15 years in sales, operation and general management. Under his leadership at the Malaysia resort, Stocks led strategic development efforts — including the opening of Sea Life Malaysia in April 2019. Stocks succeeds **Peter Ronchetti**, who recently retired after serving 11 years at the Southern California property.

Stocks

Nick Thompson, deputy managing director of **Blackpool Pleasure Beach**, is now additionally responsible for development and innovation at the U.K. amusement park. Thompson has been instrumental in a number of key projects, bringing the intellectual property (IP) of **Nickelodeon** to the park in 2011 and *Wallace & Gromit*, the key **Aardman Animations** IP, in 2013. He continued this trend by securing a license agreement with the U.K.'s **Ministry of Defence** for the Red Arrows Skyforce ride, which opened in 2015. Together with his sister, **Amanda Thompson**, OBE, Blackpool's managing director, he launched Icon, the U.K.'s first double-launch steel roller coaster, in 2018.

Thompson

Iger, Chapek in Disney executive shift

Bob Iger (above left) has stepped down as CEO of The Walt Disney Co. Bob Chapek (above right), most recently chairman of Disney Parks, Experiences and Products, is the company's new CEO. Iger will serve in the role of executive chairman — directing Disney's creative endeavors until his contract ends Dec. 31, 2021.
COURTESY THE WALT DISNEY CO

SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

Europa-park's energy-efficient train — page 40 / Inaugural Midwest Safety conference — page 42

Covenant Health and Dollywood form partnership

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — **Dollywood** officials announced in mid-February that **Covenant Health** has become the park's official health system partner. The partnership focuses on the organizations' shared commitments to excellence and to improving the quality of life in the region.

As part of the multiyear agreement, the Knoxville-based health system will work with the theme park staff on a number of projects, including upgrades to the park's baby care facilities, nursing centers and the Calming Room, which will receive upgraded and new activities and equipment to aid families who use the room.

The Calming Room, introduced to Dollywood guests in 2016, is a room for guests with special needs such as autism as well as any guest who may have a sensory overload while visiting the park. It is a quiet, relaxing environment where the guest and family can feel safe and at ease. It is equipped with sensory items such as a weighted blanket, fiber optic strands and a teepee.

Covenant Health also will offer health-related activities for guests, including hand-sanitizing stations and health tips signage throughout the park. The company also will become a co-presenting sponsor of Dollywood's Light the Way 5k.

The agreement extends to **Dollywood's Splash Country**, with many of the same initiatives taking place at the water park.

•dollywood.com

Global partnership helps increase autism water safety

AT: *Pam Sherborne*
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Ellis & Associates is a leader in aquatic safety and risk management consulting. The company has formed a partnership with the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards, a leader in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education and corporate professionals, to present a Lifeguard Autism Training program. The program is available immediately. COURTESY ELLIS & ASSOCIATES

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The **National Autism Association** has stated that drowning is among the leading causes of death of individuals with autism. At the same time, research showed that many individuals on the autism spectrum have an affinity for water.

So, it seemed like a natural evolution for a partnership to be formed between **Ellis & Associates** (E&A), a leader in aquatic safety and risk management consulting, and **International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards** (IBCCES), a leader in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education and corporate professionals.

That partnership has become the Lifeguard Autism Training program. Designed to strengthen aquatic safety for individuals with autism and other cognitive disorders, the program makes available IBCCES training and certification to lifeguards internationally through E&A training and certification programs.

The first training session has already taken place. It was presented by IBCCES Feb. 25 at Safety School East, powered by E&A in Abu Dhabi through **SST,** a Dubai-based international company offering globally recognized safety training programs from E&A and consultation for aquatic facilities.

"Since 1983, Ellis and Associates has been at the forefront of researching, developing and teaching advanced lifeguard skills," said **Richard "RAC" Carroll**, senior vice president and chief operating officer at E&A. "Partnering with IBCCES gives our team of instructors the power to immediately impact aquatic safety and guest service while meeting the needs of those with autism and their family members.

Carroll

With our global reach, this fantastic Lifeguard Autism Training will be immediately available to aquatic facilities, large and small, around the world."

IBCCES President **Meredith Tekin** said that there is a growing need for people to be aware and to understand how to work with people with autism because of the growing rate of autism diagnoses.

The certification program is focusing on the latest research and best practices for autism awareness and education, identifying and assisting individuals with autism, as well as communication strategies to help lifeguards when interacting with parents and caregivers as well as individuals with autism.

Tekin

To gain the certification, professionals undergo online training, complete a competency exam, and verify their professional qualifications. Continuing education will be required to maintain the credential. In addition, training for the credential will cover four main competencies. Professionals will receive an overview of autism, including sensitivities of those on the spectrum and myths surrounding the condition.

They are taught that some individuals might be non-verbal, some highly intelligent and gifted.

For almost 20 years, IBCCES has been around the globe. According to IBCCES officials, the association has seen that many families with children who have special needs have limited travel and recreation. This program is aimed to increase their options.

Currently, one in 59 children in the U.S. are diagnosed with autism, with diagnosis rates rising in countries all over the world.

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Europa-Park creates energy-efficient passenger train system

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Europa-Park converted one of its trains to electric operation by the end of 2019. Four loading units (right) in each station charge trains in under two minutes when parked. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

RUST, Germany — **Europa-Park** opened its gates in 1975 with a handful of rides. Panoramabahn, a train ride featuring **C.P. Huntington** vehicles from **Chance Rides**, endures as one of the park's most beloved — and oldest — rides.

The park operated five trains on the attraction up until a devastating fire in May of 2018. Piraten in Batavia, an extensive dark ride, caught fire and not only destroyed that very ride, but also two of the trains stored in the shelter adjacent to it. In a great example of cooperation between theme parks within Germany, Europa-Park was able to purchase two trains from **Heide-Park** (Saltou) and return Panaramabahn to its full capacity.

With this time of transition, Europa-Park found an opportunity to be forward thinking. As green initiatives become more global, management investigated possibilities of doing things better.

"The idea of electrifying the popular Panoramabahn came from the idea of saving fossil fuels in connection with the desire for sustainability," said **Dr. Volker Klaiber**, director of operations and service.

Having considered the switch from fossil fuels to electric engines for a couple of years, Europa-Park did a huge screening of the market. However, not finding any manufacturer that fit its needs in retrofitting the engines, the park decided to do it on its own. The conversion of the systems is a complex project based on a master thesis supervised jointly by Europa-Park and the **Karlsruhe Institute of Technology**. The implementation was then carried out in close cooperation with **SEW Eurodrive**, a German-based manufacturer of electric engines.

The electric locomotive is charged inductively, i.e. contactless, at each stop during the round-trip journey. This takes place in the station within just two minutes. For this purpose, four loading units are installed per station, on which the electric locomotive automatically engages when in place. The custom-made components were developed in close dialogue between SEW and the electrical engineers and mechanics of Europa-Park.

Passengers are unlikely to note any difference, but the cleaner system did present one wrinkle — the experience.

"Passengers will not have to worry about losing the sounds of the diesel locomotive in the future, as the built-in sound systems imitate the nostalgic sounds deceptively real," said **Lukas Metzger**, head of operations.

"In addition, the locomotive will also steam as before. Pure tap water is broken down into ultrafine particles with the help of ultrasound, so that fog is created and the ambience of the Panoramabahn is preserved. The retrofitting is benefiting for everyone!" Klaiber told *Amusement Today*.

One train was fully equipped near the end of 2019. As the 2020 season begins this spring, a second unit will be introduced. The park will immediately begin on the next one.

"We learned from the first prototype very much. The next trains will all benefit from these learnings," said Klaiber."

Northwestern Showmen's Club's 40th safety seminar a success

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PORTLAND, Ore. — The **Northwestern Showmen's Club (NWSC) Safety Seminar** concluded it's 40th continuous year of teaching outdoor amusement safety in February and organizers are happy with the 2020 results.

The seminar, held Feb. 17-20, drew 125 students, slightly down from last year's number but still close enough for organizers. The seminar has traditionally taken place in two locations during its four-day run, Oaks Amusement Park and the Funtastic Shows campus, both in Portland. The 2020 seminar was no different.

There were 35 different classes this year, all taught by volunteer industry professionals.

"We are so proud of our volunteer speakers/teachers who give their time to this seminar and thank them for making this industry safer," said **Morrie Haworth** NWSC safety seminar chair.

Not only do the instructors donate their time, but so do food staff and event organizers. Sponsors also lend a helping hand.

Safety instruction includes both classroom sessions and hands-on work. Each year class topics change according to the needs of the industry. Attendees can build a tailored course curriculum that best suits their needs and the needs of their employer.

Along with the instruction, certification testing is conducted throughout the week. Testing is offered for the NWSC's Carnival Tech, **AIMS, NARRSO,** CPR and first aid.

The seminar is aligned with **Portland Community College** for accreditation in their Continuing Education Program providing four CEU's for participation and completion of the seminar.

Safety seminar organizers feel networking with other industry professionals throughout the four-day event provides invaluable opportunity for people in the carnival industry to form long lasting relationships with contemporaries across the globe.

A banquet is held on the final evening.

The 2020 seminar is the first year in many without one of its staunchest supporters, **John Hinde**. Hinde passed away Dec. 30, 2019, but his presence was certainly felt as organizers set up a memorial for him.

According to Haworth, the memorial consisted of a table with information on Hinde's life and his association with the outdoor amusement industry and all the things he loved at the seminar. The table included a fresh cup of **Starbucks Coffee**, a bagel and a few cigars.

Sponsors that provided cash support to the seminar this year included: **Show Folks of America, Outdoor Amusement Business Association, Allied Insurance, Davis Shows Northwest, Gallagher Insurance, Sweet Cheeks Food Concessions, *Amusement Today*** and **Funtastic Shows.**

•nwshowmensclub.com

Craig Hamelund from Oregon OSHA leads a class at this year's 40th Northwestern Showmen's Club Safety Seminar (left). Welding class instructor Keith Ellefson presents a demonstration to one of the attendees (right). COURTESY NORTHWESTERN SHOWMEN'S CLUB

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The inaugural Midwest Safety Conference held hands-on courses and instructor-led courses (inset) all within the walls of the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Sandusky, Ohio. COURTESY GREATER OHIO SHOWMEN'S ASSOCIATION; AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

Greater Ohio Showmen's Association wraps up inaugural safety conference

AT: *John W.C. Robinson*
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SANDUSKEY, Ohio – **The Greater Ohio Showmen's Association** (GOSA) staged a successful inaugural Midwest Safety and Operations Conference March 2-4, 2020, at **Kalahari Resort and Convention Center** in Sandusky, Ohio.

The conference provided NAARSO training and ride inspection training, as well as two days of workshops for concessionaires, games and midway personnel. Operations workshops covered topics from electrical upgrades for concession trailers to fall arrest and ladder safety training.

With the popularity of carnvials and amusement parks continuing to hold strong, and the rapidly growing FEC market expanding to include escape rooms, trampoline parks and larger facilities, more operators need proper safety training and certification than ever before. Regional events such as the Midwest Safety and Operations Conference provide this type of education with limited traveling expenses to add to overhead.

"The board of directors of GOSA felt that we had gained headway in promoting safety as an industry priority with the Moving Forward Safely program," said **David Drake**, owner of **Drake Concessions** and president of the GOSA. "It felt it was best to extend the contiuing education further into the future for all to get better educated regarding the new laws and all of the changes that have been moving forward."

The regional event saw attendees come from seven states with most of the participants originating from Ohio. The conference drew 48 participants for **NAARSO** training, 21 concessionaires for Person in Charge Ohio Food Education certification and 72 people for operations workshops.

"I think the seminar was a success. The Limited Specialty Classes (Participatory Attractions) that I have been an instructor of for the last 10 years had 18 students attend with 13 of them getting their hours for certification renewal and five students tested for the Limited Specialty Certification," stated NAARSO instructor **Avery Wheelock**, president **Worldwide Safety Group**. "I believe the feedback is good from all who attended."

The positive feedback already has the GOSA preparing to hold the conference once again in 2021.

"The second annual conference will again be held at Kalahari Convention Center in Sandusky, Ohio," asserted **Eric German**, conference organizer. "The space is large enough to set up rides inside, allowing the hands-on training segments to be delivered indoors adjacent to the classrooms."

The location and classes were a resounding success among those who attended.

"The resort's African decoration motif reminded me of the John Wayne movie *Hatari*. In the movie, there were many challenges and opportunities but most of all there was commitment and teamwork for their business success," said **Richard Gockelman** of **Firestone Finanacial**, an event sponsors. "I see the same theme for the Greater Ohio Showmen's Association — Carnival industry owners and operators coming together to make the industry better and safer for everyone."

"The association is proud to continue its role in making the outdoor amusement industry safe and thanks all of the sponsors that helped make this event happen," said Drake.

The second annual conference will be March 1 – 3, 2021.

•safetyconf.com

Todd Kensler of Carnival Show Sign Co. was one of the seminar's sponsors and exhibited during the event. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

AIMS INTERNATIONAL

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2020 AIMS Seminar a success, planning for 2021 underway

Many thanks to everyone who helped make the **2020 AIMS Safety Seminar** another huge success! More than 450 amusement industry professionals gathered in Galveston, Texas, to take advantage of the amazing opportunity to learn from and network with industry safety experts.

Thanks go to our nearly 100 volunteer instructors for sharing their knowledge, passion and experience with our students. These are the people who make the amusement industry safe for all.

A special nod to **Matt Heller** for his keynote speech, The Cause and Effect of Safety, that focused on how an individual can influence safety in his/her own environment, a perfect kickoff for the week!

Thanks go to our 2020 AIMS Ambassadors from **Six Flags Fiesta Texas**: **Leah Rangel**, **Sarah Shaw**, **Justice De Lacruz**, and **Caeton Bomersbach**.

AIMS appreciated our amazing volunteers ready and able to help in every way: **Tracy Shedd**, **Randy Vakiener**, **Mark Hatton**, **C.W. Craven**, **Nick Buffa**, **Rob Gavel**, **Tony Claassen** and **Rick Achard**.

Every one of our sponsors who recognize the importance of supporting our mission to improve industry safety through leadership in education were appreciated.

A big thanks goes to **Joe Zdnueck** and **Dan Levo** and everyone at the **Galveston Pleasure Pier** and **Landry's** for hosting a fantastic evening at the Pier including ride time on several rides, plus games, music and a huge spread including an incredible shrimp boil, BBQ buffet, desserts and wine, beer and other beverages.

The Annual AIMS membership meeting was held on Jan. 13, 2020, in Galveston Texas. AIMS Board President, **Franceen Gonzales**, and Executive Director, **Mary Jane Brewer**, reviewed the financial performance of the organization, as well as some of the new initiatives that were approved by the AIMS Board of Directors in 2019. Many of these new initiatives were related to technology tools, including a new safety seminar registration check-in system and a new safety seminar mobile app, which were both beta-tested at the 2020 Safety Seminar, as well as a new AIMS website and learning management system (LMS), which will launch later in the spring of 2020. The LMS, which will be named AIMS ConnectEd, will provide e-learning opportunities for continuing education via a portal located on the new AIMS website. Both the new website and AIMS ConnectED are expected to be available and ready to use in mid-April 2020. Please check www.aimsintl.org for more details to come.

With the AIMS fiscal year beginning April 1, 2020, **Tony Claassen** will take the reins as AIMS Board President, replacing Franceen Gonzales, who has served as board president for the past year. We thank Franceen for her service to AIMS and wish Tony all the best as he guides us into the next stage of development. Stay tuned for more from Tony in the next few months!

It's not too early to start planning for 2021! The AIMS Safety Seminar will be held Jan. 10-15, 2021, in Galveston, Texas. Early registration will open in July.

AIMS International announces 2020 board

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The **AIMS International** Board of Directors is pleased to announce that effective April 1st, **Tony Claassen,** of **Herschend Family Entertainment**, has become president of the AIMS board of directors. He replaces **Franceen Gonzales,** who served for the past year. The board also appointed **David Bromilow**, director, parks and attractions at **Moboro** as vice president. **Timo Klaus**, executive vice president at **KumbaK — The Amusement Engineers**, has been appointed treasurer, replacing **Linda Freeman, Rockwell Automation**, who served in that role for the past four years. **George Tso**, engineering executive director, **Ocean Park**, Hong Kong, remains secretary.

Despite stepping down from their roles as officers, Gonzales and Freeman will continue to serve on the AIMS board of directors.

Space for this AIMS page is provided courtesy of *Amusement Today* as a corporate partner of AIMS Intl. Content is provided by *AT* & AIMS.

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ASTM International meets in New Orleans

Representatives of the amusement industry came together to learn and network during the ASTM F24 Amusement Rides and Devices symposium held at the Marriott New Orleans in Louisiana, Feb. 12-15. From left are Tony Claassen, Mary Jane Brewer and her husband, Jeff Abendshine, Jerry Aldrich and Gina Claassen. COURTESY PAT HOFFMAN

Those attending the 2020 ASTM F24 meeting in New Orleans had a packed schedule. At left, relaxing at the end of one of the four-day event, are (l to r): Pat Hoffman, Boyd Jensen, Jerry Aldrich and Jim Seay. At right, Franceen Gonzales addresses attendees at the symposium. Gonzales is the new chairman of the ASTM F24. COURTESY PAT HOFFMAN

The announcement of ASTM award winners is a big evening for the ASTM F24 symposium attendees. Here, they are gathered during the award banquet to hear the winners' names. The symposium was held in New Orleans, Feb. 12-15. COURTESY PAT HOFFMAN

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Larson Intl. augments design and manufacturing services

PLAINVIEW, Texas — Larson Intl., Inc., has expanded its ride design and manufacturing capabilities, and its general service offerings, with the addition of a new CNC (computer numerical control) pipe profiler, shown being installed last November. The equipment's six-axis plasma torch cuts pipe with accurate angles and bevels, allowing for the creation of large tubular structures. The company purchased the machine, which is six feet wide and 50 feet long — large enough to cut a 42-foot-long pipe up to two feet in diameter — primarily to produce roller coaster support columns for other manufacturers when it has the capacity. While the equipment requires only a single operator, material handling usually involves at least two people for loading and off-loading because of size and weight. Said Larson mechanical engineer Hunter Novotny: "This addition to our shop allows us more design freedom for our products." AT/GARY SLADE

East Coast NAARSO Safety School coincides with NJAA gift show

AT: *B. Derek Shaw*
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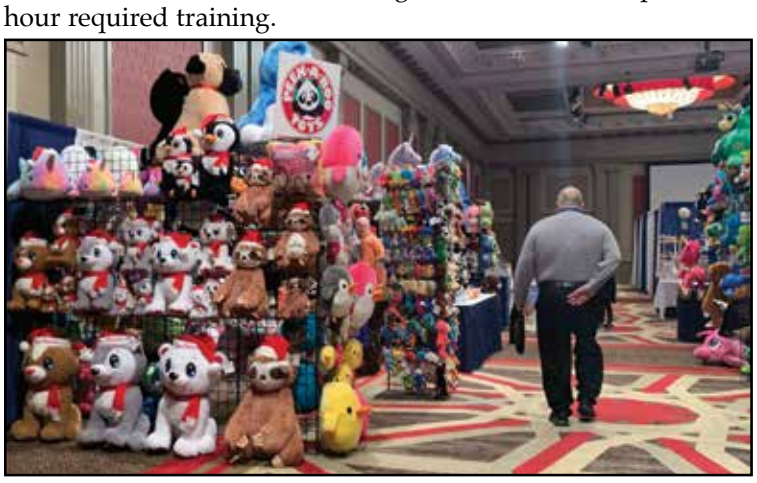
ATLANTIC CITY — The 25th annual **East Coast Gift and Variety Show** was recently held at the **Golden Nugget Resort and Casino**. The show occurs each mid-February in conjunction with the East Coast/Mid-Atlantic regionalized **NAARSO (National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials) Outreach Safety School**, that was attended by 105 people who received continuing education certificates. Additionally, 25 people took the exams for Level I or Level II certification.

The NAARSO Education Committee put together 20 hours of education ranging from basic classes to advanced ones in maintenance, inspection and operations. Topics included understanding ladder logic, preventive verses preventative maintenance, incident documentation, operational audits, PPE, and specific ride inspection, among others. One particular class was the ABC's of OSHA 10, a one hour session on what is coming with OSHA requirements and training of all employees. This class was designed to educate attendees on the 10 hour required training.

NAARSO has teamed up with NJAA for the 12th time. "NAARSO tries to accommodate all requests for training that we receive," said **Michael Wood**, NAARSO president. "The goal of the NAARSO outreach program is to train any person on amusement ride safety that desires it, and hopefully put a NAARSO credential showing evidence of that training in every person's wallet that touches an amusement ride as part of their daily life," said Wood.

There were more than 40 vendors in the East Coast Gift and Variety Show, filling the 5,000-square-foot grand ballroom. The event is designed to connect and network with professionals from various segments of the tourism industry. Attendees included owners, partners, managers and buyers; as well as employees of amusement parks, arcades, games, concessions, piers and restaurants. Exhibitors included plush, ice cream, licensed toys, equipment, signs, novelties and other suppliers. There were a pair of new vendors on the trade show floor, **Watchfire Signs, LLC**, and **Mitchel Yarwin Sales**.



The 40 exhibitors included plush, ice cream, licensed toys, equipment, signs, novelties and other items. COURTESY NJAA

The East Coast Gift and Variety Show is a treasure trove for the plush buyer, as there are many vendors displaying their wares at the two-day show. COURTESY NJAA

Kimberle Samarelli, executive director of the newly re-named **New Jersey Attractions Association** (NJAA) described the overall show feeling. "We had a great vibe, and lots of enthusiastic vendors. The show was buzzing with lots of upbeat and happy customers looking forward to the upcoming season." Samarelli felt the 2019 amusement industry climate in New Jersey was "excellent and upbeat."

The gift and variety show started as a motel show in the mid 1970s at the **Aztec Hotel** in Seaside Heights, N.J. Vendors operated out of their rooms, with attendees traveling room to room. During the past 25 years under NJAA auspices, the show has been held in Toms River, Brick, Long Branch, Somerset and Atlantic City. Most recently, Atlantic City casino venues have been the norm, with **Trump Marina** six times, **Taj Mahal** twice and the current **Golden Nugget** location 11 times.

In front of the Wednesday trade show start, the **New Jersey Department of Community Affairs** provided their annual briefing and panel discussion to discuss the Recognized Certified Maintenance Technician Program. After the trade show opened, Lary Zucker and Ashley Toth with the law practice of **Marshall Dennehey Warner Coleman & Goggin, P.C** presented an employment law seminar. Finally, **Michael Forcella** from **Ocean County College** presented a customer service seminar going over the important dos and don'ts of that important topic. That evening the 30th annual Scholarship Fund Cocktail Party was held on the trade show floor. Nearly $5,000 in scholarships were previously awarded to five college students who are continuing their education. The Wednesday evening event is regarded as one of the highlights of the show.

Before the trade show opened on Thursday, a 10 a.m. session by the **Legalized Games of Chance Control Commission** was held. **Joe Chessere**, from the control commission, presented on the certification and policy update.

Samarelli talked about date changes for next year. "We had to move our trade show next year because of the Super Bowl landing in Tampa and Gibsonton (Gibtown) moved their show so we are announcing our show dates will be February 9-11, 2021."

The **New Jersey Attractions Association** is a pro-active organization, identifying concerns, while working for the safety, health and overall economic betterment of the amusement industry. The **New Jersey Amusement Association Scholarship Fund, Inc.**, a separate non-profit corporation, was formed in October 1988. Scholarships to one or more students employed in the industry have been presented annually since 1990.

Pa. Ride Safety Advisory conducts quarterly board meeting

HARRISBURG, Pa. – Representatives from the amusement industry and community volunteers selected at large met at the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** headquarters in late February for their quarterly **Pennsylvania Ride Safety Advisory Board** meeting. These individuals serve as a recommending body for potential approvals that come before them. Members discuss and either accept, conditionally accept, table or reject new ride approvals that are submitted. This input is used to help the Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards determine their course of action on a particular ride approval process.

Before the business portion got under way, **Joe Filoramo**, ride safety supervisor for the Commonwealth recognized industry colleagues recently lost. "It was a tough year in the Pennsylvania ride industry," said Filoramo. Individuals included **Jack Silar, Irv Good, Bette Reithoffer, Tom Powell** and **Harry Reinhart**. Filoramo went on to say, "We are losing people faster than young people are coming on board."

Walt Remmert, Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards director introduced the fifth ride inspector for the Commonwealth. Named to the position is **Leonard Adams Jr.**, who most recently worked at **Conneaut Lake Park**. "This represents an investment back into the program [that is] well needed. We are happy to have you, we are excited," said Remmert. Adams started with the bureau in January. Prior to Adams, it was eight-and-a-half years since the department expanded their crew.

The spring meeting featured five ride approvals involving the following companies: **Bojuxcom, s.r.o, Bolliger & Mabillard, KMG, Tianjinn Mickrod Inter Trade Company** and **Visa International, S.r.l.** Rides included, respectively, a 25-meter wheel for **Tons of Fun Shows**. The state, manufacturer and carnival operator agreed upon a path for final approval. Conditional approval was granted for Candymonium hyper-coaster at **Hersheypark**, pending accelerometer testing. The Fireball was decommissioned after the 2017 **Ohio State Fair** accident. It was then re-commissioned and recertified by Pennsylvania after a change in the gondola seating. Every ride unit required a separate approval by serial number. The mini electrical train for **Phil Cerny's Mobile Mountain, Inc.** must include a fenced in area, with the trackless train traveling no faster than three mph. Finally, the 11-foot-tall Compact Spinning Coaster being installed at **Waldameer Park** was granted approval.

Knoebels Amusement Resort made a presentation on modifications they are planning to make on two of their rides: Impulse (**Zierer**) tower speed roller coaster and Flying Turns (in-house bobsled roller coaster). Due to the nature of the work, both have to be treated as major modifications. Flying Turns is being reprofiled at the end of the ride with a fourth small lift hill to aid in throughput. Currently it takes up to two hours each morning to get the bearings and wheels warmed up enough to add an additional car. Impulse will have three new ride vehicles which require a modification to the lift hill. The anti-roll backs are being replaced with a magnetic system of retractable fins with sensors when ascending the lift. **ART Engineering GmbH**, Kirchzarten, Germany, has been called in to perform the procedure. Conditional approval was granted to both pending accelerometer testing.

—B. Derek Shaw

275 people attend semiannual Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar

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At left, some of the 70 instructors of the semiannual program (from left): A.J. Slaggert and Phil Slaggert of Slaggert Risk Management, which organized the training; Debbie Henderson, from Air Castles and Slides, LLC; Ryan Gillenwater of McGowan Insurance; Guy Sherborne, amusement ride consultant; and C.W. Craven, general manager of the Washington State Fair Skyride. At right, Phil Slaggert conductd one of the 159 classes available to participants. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

HARRISBURG, Pa. – Held twice each year, the **Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar** trains and tests hundreds of amusement ride operators in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and beyond. During Feb. 25 – 27, 275 people from various amusement operations received ride safety training and testing conducted by third-party operator **Slaggert Risk Management** for the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Ride and Measurements Standards**. Classroom participants came primarily from Pennsylvania and bordering states; however there were attendees from 16 states. The 275 attendees this spring and 175 attendees last fall account for a combined total of 450 attendees annually, making this one of the larger ride safety training programs in the country.

This spring, there were a total of 159 different course options (49 on Tuesday, 53 on Wednesday and 57 on Thursday). Seminar participants selected the specialty courses they felt were beneficial for their career path, job description, abilities, and employer benefit. Some of the course areas included: inflatable rides; amusement, FEC and carnival rides; extreme sports; regulations and compliance; water attractions; maintenance; go karts; rock climbing walls and bumper boats. Weather's Impact on Outdoor Events was Tuesday morning's opening session.

New this spring was a three-hour program presented by the **Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration** for portable operators. Aerial tramways and ski lift workchair operations were a couple of new offerings along with a revised nuts, bolts, washers, anchors and torque session.

"**The International Association of Trampoline Parks** is offering their service tech program, as a track," said **A.J. Slaggert**, one of the instructors. A four-part legal series on preventive law rounded out the course offerings.

Some of the participating parks included **Kennywood Entertainment, Hersheypark** and **Dutch Wonderland**, while carnivals that sent attendees included **Reinhart Amusements, Nonweiler Amusements, Penn Valley Shows, Amusements of America, Oscar's Amusements** and **Circus Time Amusements**. Other related participating operations included **The Carousel at Pottstown, Seven Springs Mountain Resort** and **Carnival Concessions**. "Everybody else is rental companies, FECs, ski resorts, that kind of thing," said Slaggert.

The 70 instructors and staff are all volunteers with a wide spectrum of specialties that impact the amusement industry, from all across the country. Testing was provided for Class 1 and 2 ride inspectors, general qualified inspectors and specialized inspectors. The Pennsylvania certification is recognized in many states across the country, including **RCMT (Recognized Certified Maintenance Technician)**, the program in place in New Jersey.

Slaggert described the difference between the spring and fall training opportunities. "The spring program is bigger, because we also offer tracks for water attractions, go-karts and bumper boats, which aligns with Pennsylvania's licenses. In both programs we offer independent inspector Class II and Class I and specialty licenses for inflatables, haunted attractions and extreme sports."

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has inspected and registered amusement rides under the Amusement Ride Safety Act since 1984 and regularly participates in education and outreach seminars that include classes and hands-on demonstrations. The next Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar is scheduled for Nov. 3 - 5 at the **Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center**, Harrisburg, just off I-283 on Lindle Road. The Pennsylvania Ride Safety program can be reached at: paridesafety.com.

The Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminars are not to be confused with the annual **PACE (Parks and Carnival Education)** seminar, jointly sponsored by **the Pennsylvania State Showmen's Association (PSSA)** and the **Pennsylvania Amusement Park & Attractions** association **(PAPA)**. That seminar, presented by **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO)**, is scheduled for Oct. 27 – 30, at **Bloomsburg University**, Bloomsburg, Pa., (classroom portion) with hands-on training at **Knoebels Amusement Resort**, Elysburg, Pa. PACE offers inspector training for Pennsylvania certified inspectors and/or NAARSO levels.

•paceseminar.com

BREAKING NEWS

U.S. park operators close to slow coronavirus

LOS ANGELES and ORLANDO — Major U.S. attractions joined a growing list of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)-related business closures as the outbreak, having mushroomed in Asia and Europe early in the year (*Amusement Today*, March 2020), continued emerging stateside.

Domestic parks planned to remain closed until the end of the March, at which time their parent companies would reevaluate the situation. Many seasonal parks, meanwhile, announced delayed openings. Restart dates remained highly uncertain, however, after the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** recommended an eight-week ban on gatherings of 50 people or more beginning March 15.

The North American attractions industry reached a turning point three days earlier, when both **The Walt Disney Co.** and **NBCUniversal** announced pauses their Anaheim and Orlando park operations.

Disneyland and **Disney California Adventure** closed March 14, as did **Universal Studios Hollywood**. **Walt Disney World Resort**'s parks closed March 15 and **Universal Orlando Resort**'s parks shuttered March 16. Disney also closed **Disneyland Paris Resort** March 15 and said its cruise line would remain docked until at least April 1.

Both Disney resorts donated excess food inventory to their local Second Harvest Food Bank. Cast members at the Disney parks on both U.S. coasts were to continue receiving pay during the closures.

Sandusky, Ohio-based **Cedar Fair Entertainment Co.** said March 12 that it was consulting with public health authorities and instituting preventative measures at its parks. The next day, it announced that **Knott's Berry Farm** in Buena Park, California, would close March 14.

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment closed all 12 of its parks March 16. Full-time employees were to continue receiving pay during the closure. **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** announced March 13 — the same day U.S. President **Donald J. Trump** declared the outbreak a national emergency — that it was immediately suspending operations nationwide.

Merlin Entertainments opted to close its **Legoland Resort** parks in Southern California on March 14 and in Central Florida on March 16. **Dollywood** in Pigeon Forge, Tenn., delayed its season grand opening by two weeks to March 28, at the earliest, while **Morey's Piers & Beachfront Waterparks** in Wildwood, N.J., has postponed its season startup until Mother's Day weekend, May 9-10.

The story was the same on the fair and carnival side, with events nationwide being postponed or canceled. Among the most noteworthy was the halting on March 11 of the **Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo**, which has been part of the Texas city's fabric since 1932.

Aside from describing the closures as "temporary," some amusement operators brought welcome lightness to the situation. The Los Angeles family entertainment center **Two Bit Circus** offered email subscribers tongue-in-cheek suggestions for creating a makeshift arcade and escape room at home. And **Quassy Amusement Park** in Middlebury, Conn., scheduled to open for the season April 25, as previously planned, offered a kids' coloring project to its subscribers.

Watch for updates at amusementtoday.com and on *AT*'s Facebook and Twitter pages (@amusementtoday).

—Dean Lamanna

Gonzales to chair ASTM F24

Franceen Gonzales

WEST CONSHOHOCKEN, Pa. — Franceen Gonzales, executive vice president, Americas, of WhiteWater, has been appointed chairperson of the ASTM F24 Committee — Amusement Rides and Devices. The first woman to hold the post, she will lead more 1,000 volunteers committed to keeping rides safe. Gonzales has focused on building leadership teams, developing operating protocols, consulting on the design of new water parks and resorts, and working on aquatic risk management throughout her career. She has held leadership roles with, among others, the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), World Waterpark Assn., Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code and AIMS Intl. COURTESY WHITEWATER WEST

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OPPORTUNITY

DYNAMIC ATTRACTIONS

Dynamic Attractions is currently looking to fill a Theme Park Ride Service Technician position

Job Description: The available position is multi-faceted and will require an individual with a wide range of skill sets and great personal drive. The candidate should be a self starter and be able to develop their own work production schedule with minimal supervision. The candidate will work with a team of professionals out of the Dynamic Attractions office in Orlando, FL. Compensation for this position includes a competitive salary, along with an incentive bonus plan and benefits.

Responsibilities:

·Traveling worldwide to perform service work on Theme Park rides ·Troubleshooting equipment to determine appropriate actions for repairs ·Using positive people skills to interact with clients and co-workers ·Ability to draw on experience and knowledge to repair unfamiliar equipment

Qualifications and Requirements:

·Experience in Amusement Ride maintenance and/or heavy industrial equipment
·Experience in Power Transmission equipment, Hydraulics and Pneumatics
·Up to 50% international travel per year ·Ability to lift and carry at least 50 lbs
·Ability to climb a 100 feet+ tall ladder ·Basic computer skills in Word and Excel

Additional Preferences:

·3+ years' work in the Amusement Industry ·Aerial Lift Operator Certification
·NAARSO and/or AIMS Inspector ·Fall Protection Training ·Forklift experience

If interested, please send resume and references to:
Kelli.Forster@DynamicAttractions.com

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